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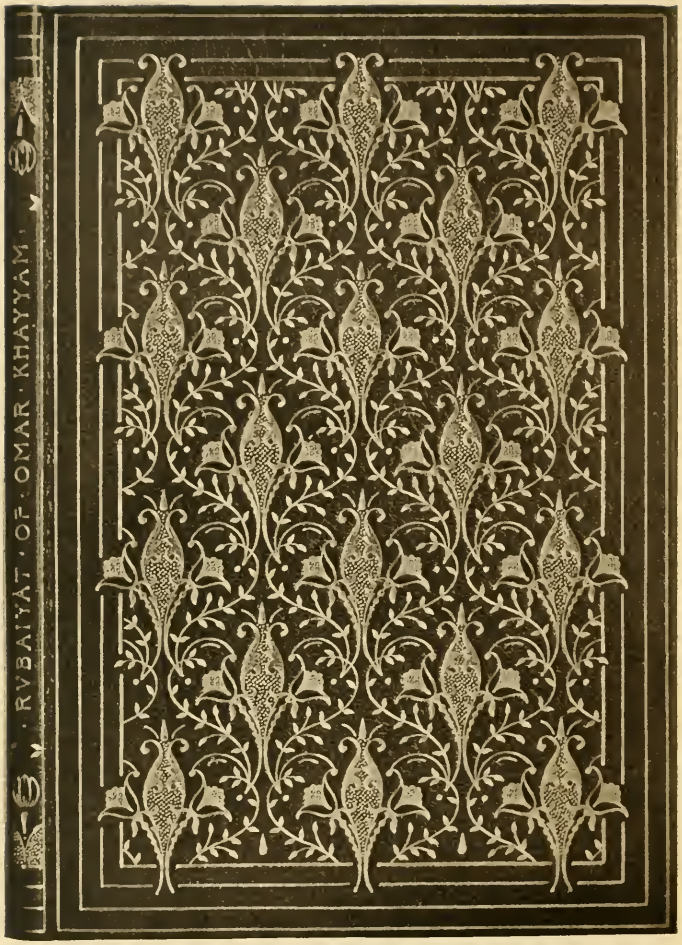
MODERN BOOKBINDINGS



1. Bound by Zaehnsdorf.

MODERN BOOKBINDINGS

THEIR DESIGN AND DECORATION

BY

S. T. PRIDEAUX

LONDON
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO.
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1906

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Modern English Binding	3
Modern French Binding	59
Edition Binding	105

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE			AT PAGE
I.	Bound by Zaehnsdorf—	*Frontispiece*	
II.	„	„	6
III.	„	„	6
IV.	„	Revière	10
V.	„	„	10
VI.	„	Morell	14
VII.	„	„	16
VIII.	„	„	16
IX.	„	De Coverly	18
X.	„	Fazakerly	20
XI.	„	„	20
XII.	„	Chivers	26
XIII.	„	„	26

PLATE			AT PAGE
XIV.	BOUND BY THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS		30
XV.	,,	,, ,,	34
XVI.	,,	,, ,,	34
XVII.	,,	THE GUILD OF HANDICRAFT	38
XVIII.	,,	DOUGLAS COCKERELL	40
XIX.	,,	,, ,,	40
XX.	,,	F. SANGORSKI AND G. SUTCLIFFE	42
XXI.	,,	DE SAUTY	44
XXII.	,,	,,	44
XXIII.	,,	MISS ADAMS	46
XXIV.	,,	MISS MACCOLL	48
XXV.	,,	MISS ALICE PATTINSON	48
XXVI.	,,	MISS MAUDE NATHAN	50
XXVII.	,,	MISS WOOLRICH	52
XXVIII.	,,	MISS PHILPOT	54
XXIX.	,,	MARIUS MICHEL	60
XXX.	,,	,, ,,	62
XXXI.	,,	,, ,,	62

PLATE			AT PAGE
XXXII.	BOUND BY LÉON GRUEL	. . .	64
XXXIII.	,, ,, ,,	. . .	68
XXXIV.	,, ,, ,,	. . .	68
XXXV.	,, ,, ,,	. . .	72
XXXVI.	,, ,, ,,	. . .	72
XXXVII.	,, MERCIER	. . .	76
XXXVIII.	,, ,,	. . .	80
XXXIX.	,, ,,	. . .	82
XL.	,, ,,	. . .	84
XLI.	,, ,,	. . .	84
XLII.	,, RUBAN	. . .	88
XLIII.	,, ,,	. . .	92
XLIV.	,, ,,	. . .	92
XLV.	,, CARAYON	. . .	94
XLVI.	,, ,,	. . .	96
XLVII.	,, ,,	. . .	96
XLVIII.	,, CHAMBOLLE	. . .	98
XLIX.	,, ,,	. . .	106
L.	,, ,,	. . .	106

PLATE			AT PAGE
LI.	Bound by	Canape	108
LII.	,,	,,	112
LIII.	,,	,,	116
LIV.	,,	,,	120
LV.	,,	,,	120
LVI.	,,	Kieffer	124
LVII.	,,	,,	128
LVIII.	,,	,,	128

MODERN ENGLISH BINDING

ERRATUM

For "Reviere" *read* "Rivière" in List of Illustrations

For "Morell" *read* "Morrell" throughout

The address of the Oxford University Press is still Amen Corner, E.C., and *not* St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, as stated on page 35.

PLATE			AT PAGE
LI.	BOUND BY CANAPE	. . . .	108
LII.	,,	,, ...	112
LIII.	,,	,, ...	116
LIV.	,,	,, ...	120
LV.	,,	,, ...	120
LVI.	,,	KIEFFER	124
LVII.	,,	,, ...	128
LVIII.	,,	,, ...	128

MODERN ENGLISH BINDING

MODERN ENGLISH BINDING

I

Within the last five-and-twenty years there has been a marked revival in every department of applied art. The influence of William Morris, whose efforts in all the accessories of house decoration were for some time only recognized by the few, has now spread to all classes. No longer confined to the houses of the rich or of those who profess the cult of aesthetics, it is to be found with more or less of travesty in country rectories and suburban villas, catered for by the enterprising tradesman on the monthly hire system. To those who remember vividly the early Victorian surroundings of the home and their prevailing

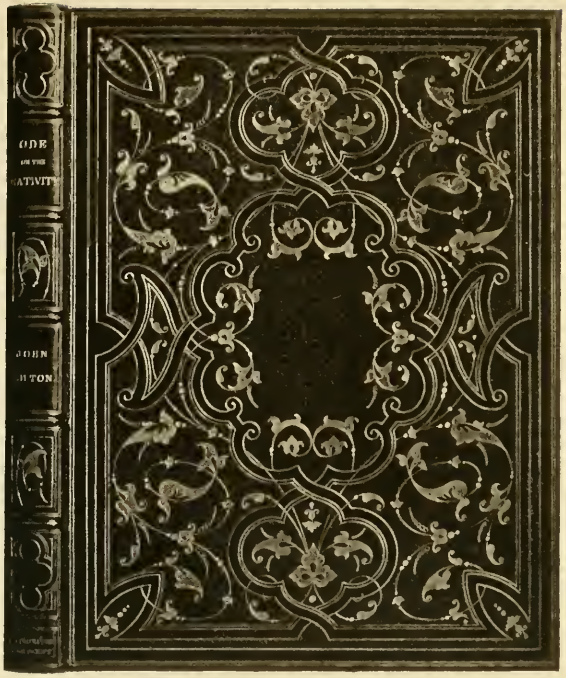
ugliness, the complete change which has taken place has hardly yet ceased to be a source of wonder. Nothing remains the same: from wall-paper to coal-box, from bedroom to kitchen, all has 'suffered a sea change.' In any examination of the present condition of the artistic crafts and the promise they present of future development on a sound basis, one cannot fail to observe that the effort to promote taste has penetrated to the commonest objects of daily use. The thought that finds expression in decoration has gone to salt-cellars and buttons as well as to carpets, cabinets and books. Some industries too, that may almost be said to have died out for lack of appreciation, have been revived on new lines and taken up by the public with enthusiastic approval. The use of enamel in jewellery and in combination with wrought metal may be mentioned as an instance of this, as well as the inlaying of cabinet work not only with coloured woods, but with pewter, ivory and pearl. The spell of con-

vention once broken, the imagination of the craftsman has found relief in flying to the furthest distance from models that were till recently his only guide. This freedom, when restrained by genuine artistic feeling, has given in many cases excellent results; but in the majority of cases the sole achievement has been an eccentricity that shows few signs of a realization of what is needed in applied art and of the laws that should govern it.

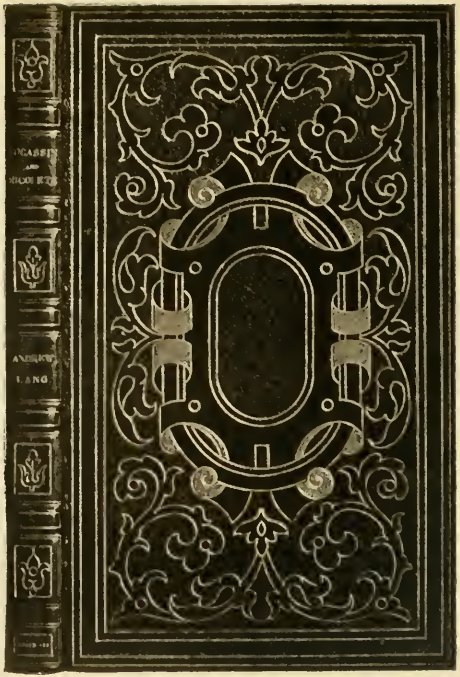
In no sphere has there been a more striking departure from the hitherto circumscribed lines of ornamentation than in everything that relates to books and their decorative treatment. Paper and ink, type and its massing on the page, illustration both as a part of the text and outside it, the materials and enrichment of the cover —all have alike undergone fundamental reconsideration. It is, however, with bindings and not with the other features of book production that we are now concerned; and it is proposed in these pages to draw

attention to what is being done in England and France in a field of work that has an increasing number of recruits and a growing and interested public.

It is now more than twenty years since the movement spoken of began to include bookbinding. During that time there has been noted the trade opposition to Mr. Cobden-Sanderson when he started as an amateur, followed by an imitation in many quarters, which, to say the least of it, is not the most subtle form of flattery. There has been also the later influence of Mr. Douglas Cockerell—a result of his strenuous craft teaching as well as of the work of his own hands—and the tardy acknowledgment of professional binders that the interest of the amateur has been productive of good even from the narrow standpoint of their class. Nor has France escaped this wave of innovation, though there formalism had a stronger hold even than with us, inasmuch as the traditions of what in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had really been



2. Bound by Zaehnsdorf.



3. Bound by Zaehnsdorf.

more of a fine art than a craft were rooted in the country with all the firmness that national pride could give. Finally, one may mark the growing enthusiasm of our American neighbours in the subject and their efforts to create a national taste in fine bindings. They show a ready acknowledgment of what is being done outside their own country, and a willingness to recognize that work directed by the artistic rather than the commercial spirit must be paid for according to a standard different to that of the ordinary tradesman.

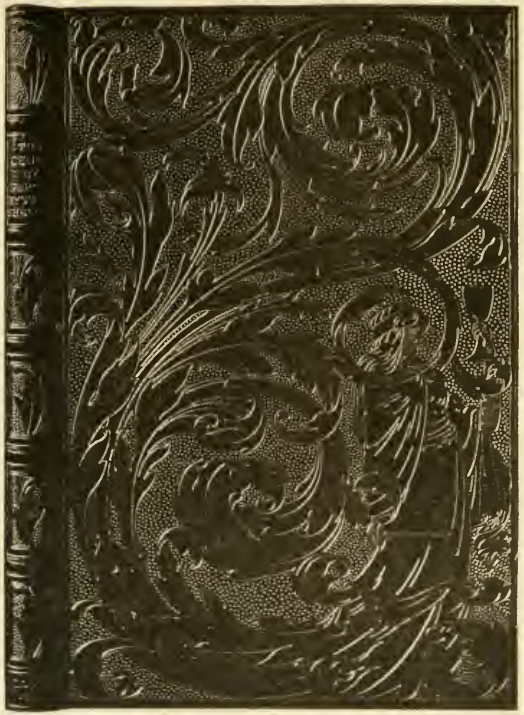
That an increasing number of people appreciate the problem of designing book covers may be judged from the fact that of late years nearly every illustrated paper has had an occasional article on one or another binder anxious to attract the public to the originality of his work. Assuming this appreciation, we will touch briefly on the craft in England before its revitalization during the last quarter of a century, and then pass in review those who are now

occupied with its decorative side and who are trying to remove it from the traditional grooves in which it lay for so long. Unfortunately, many binders doing excellent and conscientious work, on lines far more valuable than that of pattern making, must remain unnoticed, for it is only work that is striving after an effect of ornament that is capable of illustration. Of this, too, the amount has so much increased of late that it is impossible to give examples of much that equally deserves representation with what has been selected.

For a true understanding of modern effort it is necessary to realize that the art history of binding is an important one, especially in Italy and France; but in this very brief review of English binding before 1850, we need not start further back than the time when gilt tooling was brought from France. Before that period the heavier covers had been decorated with stamps often of a very beautiful kind and impressed upon the leather without gold. But in the reign

of Henry VIII., Thomas Berthelet, the King's printer, first executed gold-tooled bindings, the designs on which were frankly adopted from those that prevailed in Italy, the models, no doubt, being found among the large number of books imported from abroad at that time. Later on, when Italian binding as a fine art had been merged in that of France, the influence of the latter country is seen, as, for example, in the books bound for Thomas Wotton in imitation of Grolier, one of the most famous collectors of any age or country. Throughout the reigns of the Stuarts, English binding continues to show French influence, as a glance at the books exhibited to the public in the British Museum will show to the most casual observer. Nor had we a binder who can be said to have shown any tendency towards a native style till the time of the Restoration, when Samuel Mearne, bookbinder to the King, inaugurated what is known as the 'cottage' form of decoration. Though the elaborate filigree work on his books

reminds one that Le Gascon exercised an important influence, the form of the ornaments and their arrangement remain distinctly English. A development of this style, equally native in character, may be found a little later, during the first part of the eighteenth century, chiefly on the Bibles and Prayer-Books of the time. In these there is a certain amount of rough inlay, either in the form of a panel or in that of tulips and other conventional flowers outlined in gold, though with a dotted instead of a solid line. These ornaments, poor in themselves, which form the main part of the decoration, are often combined with great skill and sense of effect. An unusual number of such books were collected at the time of the Exhibition of Bindings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, and were found both charming and effective notwithstanding a somewhat rough and hasty workmanship. From the reign of James II. to the time of Roger Payne there are no names associated with any bindings



4. Bound by Rivière.

5. Bound by Rivière.

of importance; and with the passing of the prevailing fashion of ornament on the books just described, design reached its lowest point towards the end of the century. Of Roger Payne, who effected a genuine revival of bookbinding somewhere about 1770, it is not necessary to say much. His style is well known to all book-lovers, and the details of his eccentric life have been so often recorded that the reader must be more than weary of them. One point in connexion with his work is, however, I think, worth mentioning, and that is that his style has never lent itself to that modification in imitation which enables any artist to become the founder of a school. Any one of the skilled binders will do you a 'Roger Payne' as he will do you a 'Grolier' or a 'Le Gascon'; but it will be a reproduction of the real Roger's work, with the exact details and precise arrangement of them that are to be found on his authentic bindings. So that, notwithstanding his originality, he inspired no following, though his imitators

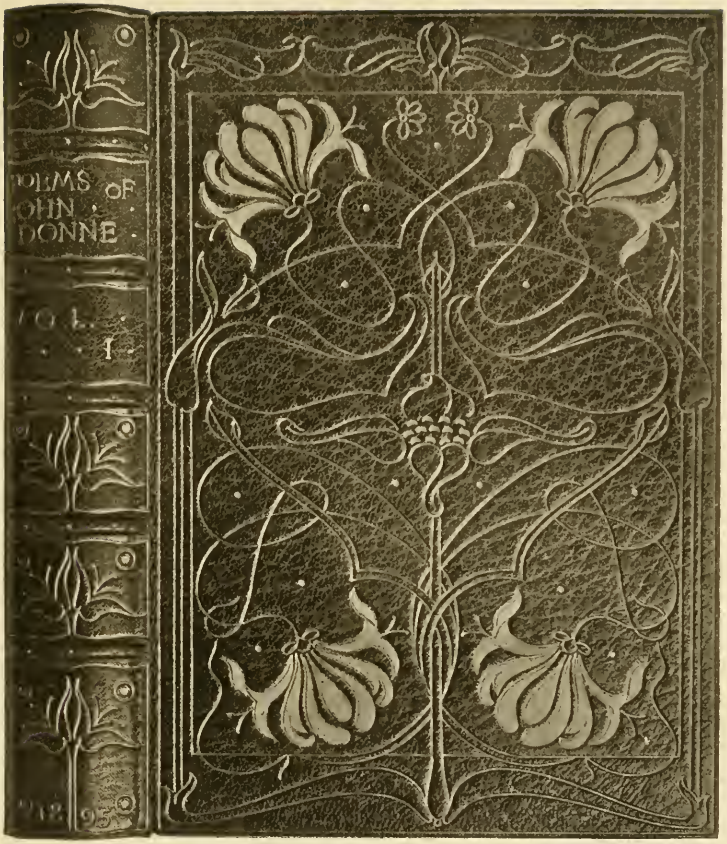
have been perhaps more numerous than those of any other binder.

Charles Lewis and Frances Bedford, followed by Robert Rivière and Joseph Zaehnsdorf, did much good work in the early part of the last century, especially Bedford; but they can lay no claim to an originality which disappeared with Payne, and which was not seen again until Mr. Cobden-Sanderson attempted to do for the binding of books what William Morris had already done for the other decorative arts. It is the result of this revived interest in handicrafts and the attempted application to binding of the more vital principles of art which it is proposed to illustrate here. One must say attempted, because success by no means always results. In this review, however, of modern binders, definite criticism is not an object, though the difficulties attendant on their efforts naturally come up for consideration and necessarily involve some expression of opinion.

Both Zaehnsdorf and Rivière left repre-

sentatives to carry on their work, the former a son, and the latter two nephews, Mr. Percy and Mr. Arthur Calkin. From the small establishments in which both houses originated there has developed in each case an important business in which an exceedingly large number of books are bound for the export as well as the retail trade. In a bindery of this nature there would not be time for the serious consideration of artistic problems unless it contained what Mr. Lethaby so aptly describes as 'a "quality" department in a "quantity" business.' It remains as true now as it has always been that the craftsman who is also an artist must work in his own way and at his own speed—a fact well realized in the French workshops, which are altogether outside the rush and pressure of commercial life. So in each of these houses we find a certain number of the more intelligent and skilful men employed only upon the best work, and engaged in carrying out designs which they either make up themselves from certain

recognised types or which are made for them by more practised designers. This introduces the question—which is a practical one for the large employer, though it need not exist for those having a comparatively limited output—whether it produces better results to keep a trained designer, or to give the pattern-making into the hands of the more artistically disposed 'finishers.' Some consider that it is impossible, so long as the education of the workman is so lamentably defective on the side of taste as it is, to expect him to plan book covers above the ordinary level of presents and school prizes; others hold that his feeling for what is good and appropriate can only be cultivated by encouraging him to the interest and responsibility of planning what he is going to execute. Mr. Calkin has long kept a designer entirely occupied on the decorated work that many of his clients demand. Other houses have tried the practice of getting drawings made by the general decorative artist, and have given it up in



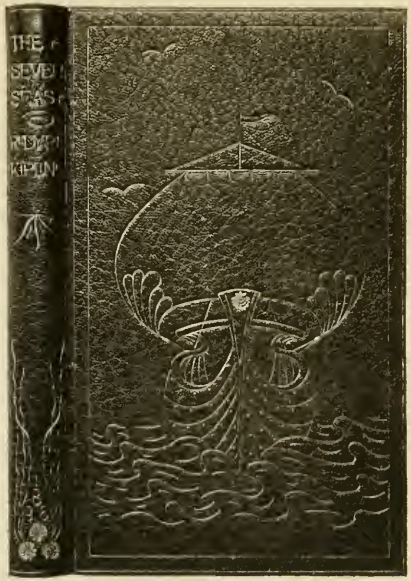
6. Bound by Morell.

disgust at the unpractical character of the results obtained. And it is true that it takes time and patience to train one accustomed to a free hand in invention to a realization of the limitations necessitated by the use of rigid stamps and the comparatively small number of them that can be employed on a binding.[1] Ask any professed

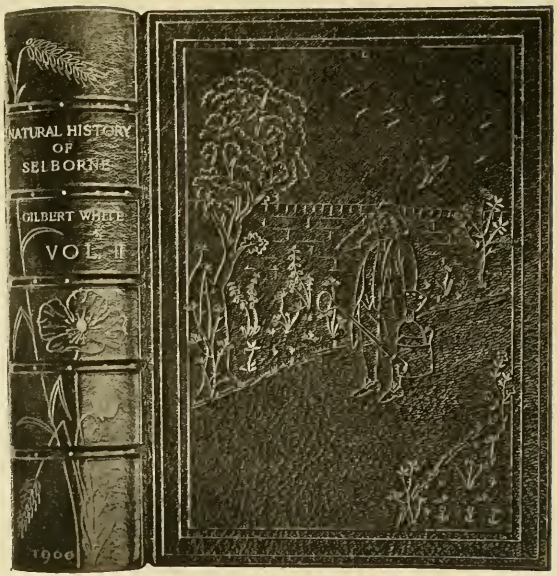
[1] For the benefit of those who are interested in the technicality of what is known as 'tooling,' we will briefly describe in what it consists. 'Finishing tools' are stamps of metal that have a pattern cut on the face, and the shanks of which are held in wooden handles. Such patterns can be complete in themselves, or the single 'tools' may have only the elements of a pattern that needs to be built up, for the 'tools' must not be too large, or they cannot be worked with sureness of result. The design is composed of these 'tools' in combination with gouges which are curved lines. The drawing is first made accurately on paper by means of blackening the tools in a candle or lightly impressing them on an ink-pad. This paper is then placed on the book and slightly attached with paste at each corner. The tools are next gently heated and reworked on the drawing, leaving an impression in 'blind,' as it is called, on the leather sufficient to be seen through the gold leaf when this is applied ready for the next operation. The cover is now damped with water and the impressions left by the tools pencilled over with a preparation of white of egg known as glaire, applied with a camel-hair brush. When this is sufficiently dry, but not too dry, the gold leaf is put on, and the individual 'tools,' taken at just the right heat, are reworked in the impressions seen faintly beneath the gold. Fresh gold may have to be applied and the pattern reworked

pattern maker to make you a device for a book cover, and you will get something which, though it may be satisfactory and attractive in itself, will be either impossible of execution or give the most disappointing results. Naturally, where any firm happens to possess workmen of the required taste and ability, they should be encouraged to the utmost to give effect to their sense of drawing in its application to their own trade. Messrs. Morell, whose large business is entirely a wholesale one, supplies all the booksellers with bindings designed by his men and remarkable for their variety

several times if the tools are solid or the leather for any reason presents special difficulties. These are, roughly speaking, the processes necessary to the working of a design, though many small ones have been omitted. It will be seen at once, however, from this brief account: firstly, that there are no free-hand possibilities about the operation; and secondly, that to be a good finisher a workman should know something of drawing, for he cannot make a correct pattern, much less one that has any organic meaning, unless he understands how to combine small tools with taste and judgment. He must know what to leave out as well as what to put in; if there is inlaying, he must have a sense of colour-harmony and contrast, and he must understand enough of styles not to mix up those of different periods, nor to select one that is unsuitable to the special character of the book.



7. Bound by Morell.



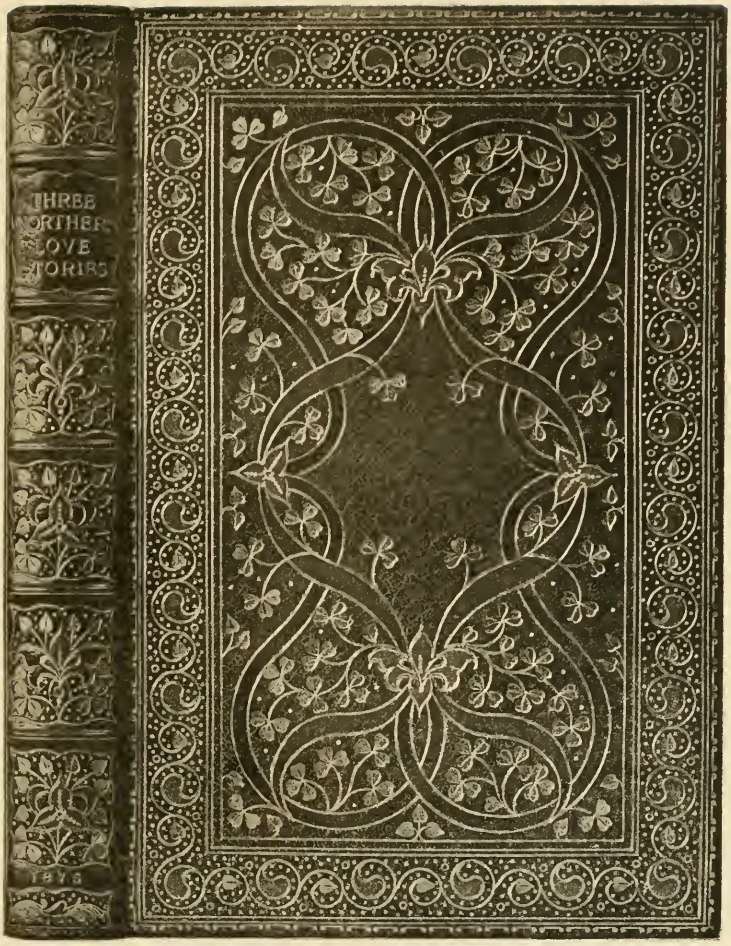
8. Bound by Morell.

and merit. It is too early to speak of the influence of the technical schools upon the output of the large workshops, but when one knows that the three houses above mentioned employ some 200 men between them, it can easily be imagined that the training of the workman is a serious consideration.[1] It is customary now for binders to keep a record of their more special work, and in this way the extent of their range can be noted by the employer and undue repetition prevented. Another improvement on the past is that designs are not now multiplied as they used to be—that is to say, in the best class of work. A specially planned cover is not repeated or

[1] The technical schools, it may be noted, with the exceptions perhaps of the Borough Polytechnic, are not looked on with favour by the trade, who are ever adverse to any alteration in the traditional habits of a craft; but it is difficult to see, without some experiments of the kind, how the learner is to get the advantages of intelligent training, which he did under the old system of apprenticeship. Now that Trades Unions have a tendency to deteriorate the quality and limit the output of the adult worker, it is well that there should be some influences brought to bear upon him in the earlier stages of his career that make for appreciative insight into the meaning of his work and cultivate his taste in its more artistic possibilities.

even published without the owner's consent; and this is a wise plan, for all art, even the best, suffers by vain repetition, and a good and appropriate pattern on a book will be but a weariness to the eye when it is seen in multiplicity in booksellers' windows.

The concluding illustrations in this chapter show work done by Mr. Roger de Coverly and Mr. Harry Wood. Mr. de Coverly served his apprenticeship to the elder Zaehnsdorf, and was afterwards employed for many years by Messrs. Leighton. In 1863 he set up for himself, and his sound taste being discovered by Mr. F. S. Ellis and Mr. William Morris, he soon got the custom of many of those who were then seeking its application to bindings. In 1883 he took one of his clients, Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, as a pupil, and has had others since. He considers his speciality to be vellum work; but unfortunately this does not show well in reproduction. Mr. Wood was also with Zaehnsdorf, working for him as a finisher for twelve years. He subse-



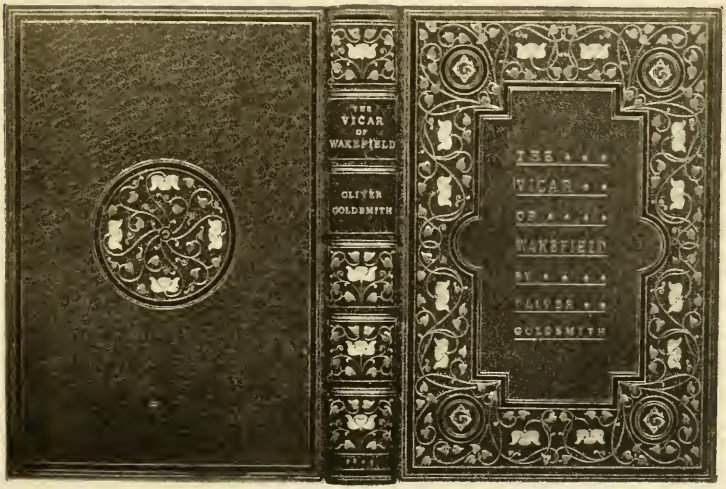
9. Bound by de Coverly.

quently managed and in the end bought the business of Mr. Kaufmann in Soho, which he has greatly expanded, and which is now managed by his son. Neither he nor de Coverly have ever sought the heavy expenses and responsibilities of a large undertaking, but have been content with a personal business in which they themselves have always taken an active part.

II

Although the chief place to study bookbinders and their craft is naturally London, there are several provincial centres where it flourishes, and where it has been touched by that movement for developing the artistic as well as the business side which we noticed in the previous chapter. In large country towns it is impossible for work to be as much specialized as it is in London; consequently a large bindery will do business of a most miscellaneous kind, embracing everything from pamphlets to fine-tooled morocco bindings, and including albums, ledgers, library and school books for prizes. Mr. Fazakerly in Liverpool, Mr. Birdsall in Northampton, and Mr. Chivers in Bath, all have establishments more or less of this kind.

10. Bound by Fazakerly.



11. Bound by Fazakerly.

Mr. Fazakerly was one of the first binders, certainly outside of London, who refused to support the excessive competition in cheapness, and who struck out a department in which fine work could be executed at prices that were remunerative and not prohibitive. Happily the result of his efforts shows the success of a refusal to pander to that desire for cutting prices which has done so much to ruin the crafts on their artistic side. For some time after he had educated his workmen to the responsibility of his new venture, he found that the taste of his customers lay towards a reproduction of old models, but he has of late been quite successful in directing it on to new lines. One feature may be noted in connexion with the morocco work of Mr. Fazakerly, namely, that the under cover is rarely decorated with the same design as the upper. If the lower cover is left quite plain, the effect is poor, and suggests that trouble has been spared on the book as a whole; but there is no reason for the con-

vention, almost universally adopted, whereby the two sides are entirely alike. The same tools and elements of design should appear in each cover, only disposed in different schemes of ornament, and such variation naturally implies more thought, the thought that avoids repetition. One of Mr. Fazakerly's innovations was the employment of embossed leather, which has since spread to many other houses; and another which he considers a specialty of his business is the decoration of the edges of books, both by means of tooling on them or gauffering, as it is more generally called, and also by painting underneath the gold. We may recall that in the sixteenth century this extension of ornament to the leaves of a book was very prevalent, and was only one of many indications that the workman spent ungrudging time and thought on the details of what was intended to be a work of art throughout.[1] Some very fine specimens of

[1] With tooled edges the leaves of the book are gilt as usual, and while still in the press, the head, tail and foredge are

gauffered edges may be seen on the works of Luther in seven folio volumes, dated Jena 1572-1581, now in South Kensington Museum. The volumes being very thick offer fine scope for ornament, which consists of the shield of Saxony painted in the centre of each foredge, the rest of the space being filled with arabesques and Renaissance ornaments. And there is, we believe, still in this country part of the library that once belonged to Odonico Pillone of Belluno, comprising some hundred and forty folios with foredges painted by the hand of Cesare Vecellio, a nephew of Titian.[1]

worked over with 'tools' that are open in character, the finer ones being preferable. These tools must be slightly warmed, so that the impression may be firm. Sometimes the edge is tooled on the gold before burnishing, when the impressed pattern will naturally be of a different colour to the burnished part, as the burnisher will glide over the indentations. At others a different-coloured gold is laid on the top of the first and tooled upon, when the pattern will be left in the new gold on the original colour.

[1] This painting can be with or without gold. In any case, it is necessary that the leaves should be fanned out and tied slightly between boards. While in this position the colour is applied, which can be either a stain or water-colour moistened with size. When dry, the leaves are released, and may be left

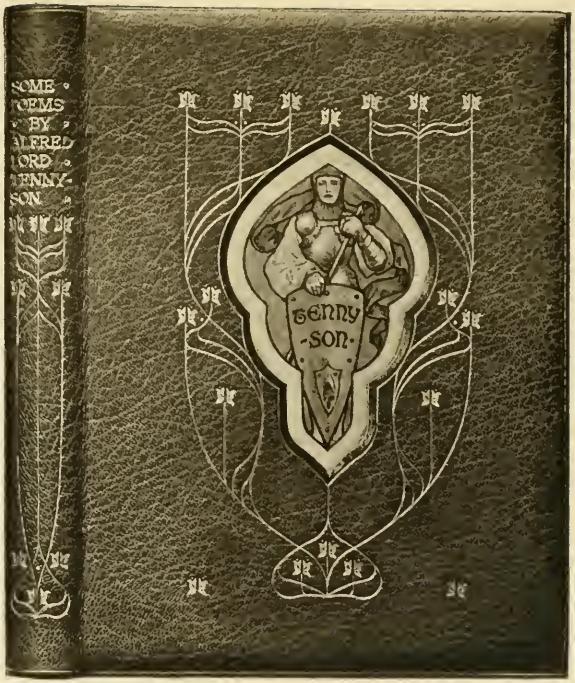
The painting of edges was revived in England, and reappears in thoroughly native style on books of the latter half of the eighteenth century. Charming little English landscapes are to be found on some of them, which, as the painting is done when the leaves are fanned out and held in that expanded position, are not in evidence when the book is shut, but when open appear at once. The name of William Edwards of Halifax and his son James is especially associated with this work, and their books are not very rare. Mr. Fazakerly has done a great deal of this decoration, which requires certain conditions to ensure success. The painter must be an artist, and the paper on which he works should be rather thin than thick; the modern fashion of printing on a sort of cardboard handicaps the binder not only in this, but other and far more important ways. Mr. Fazakerly has

as they are or gilt in the ordinary way, when the colour will show through the gold, gaining a lustre and richness it would not otherwise have.

also made some innovations in 'doublures,' a term applied to the inside face of the boards when lined with leather or decorative material. In the matter of doublures the last word has not been said, and there is still room for experiment. The French custom of violent-coloured watered silks or equally salient inlays has never found much favour in this country; but there has been a great dearth both of invention and taste in dealing with this feature of a binding. Some of Zaehnsdorf's doublures have silk either of the same colour as the cover, or in harmony with it, and he has tried Russia leather with considerable success. Unsuitable as it is for the outside cover from its tendency to rapid deterioration, it makes a very good board lining, and can be employed as well for the flyleaf opposite; indeed, it is better where possible that doublure and flyleaf should be the same. It is with calf that Mr. Fazakerly has made his innovation, and when delicately tinted and incised, but not embossed, the results

seem pleasant and appropriate. On books relating to Japan, the number of which is largely on the increase, some of the coloured Japanese embossed papers make excellent doublures. Before dismissing this subject, we may mention the attempt of Mr. Bagguley, a binder at Newcastle-under-Lyme, to tool on vellum in colour. Some of this work, designed by Léon Solon and Miss Talbot, is very delicate and attractive; so delicate, in fact, that it is only suitable for the inside of a book. His patterns are composed chiefly of gouge and line work, as no effect of solid mass can be apparently got in the colour, and the effect is enhanced by dots and other small tools worked in gold. The excessively detailed nature of this work, which is made up of 'tools' small and light in character, heavier dies not being suitable for the stamping of colour, render it costly of execution, but there is no doubt that its occasional use offers a desirable variation on the ordinary inside lining. It is difficult to close this subject without a few words in

12. Bound by Chivers.



13. Bound by Chivers.

condemnation of the coloured papers used by most binders for ordinary work which does not admit of anything more elaborate. It is time they gave up the German marbled patterns, the French 'combs,' and even the spirit marbles which produce the effect of violent colour thrown on wet blotting-paper and appear to be the latest fashion of monstrosity in such things. Good white hand-made papers or vellum papers are the most suitable, while if coloured ones are deemed essential, the French and Van Gelder crayon papers toning harmoniously with the morocco are not likely to be an offence.

The business of Messrs. Birdsall at Northampton takes us to another centre of provincial activity in binding, and it has an especial interest in being one of the oldest bookbinding businesses in the country. It has been in the hands of the present proprietors' family well over a hundred years, and has a connected history since 1757, when John Lacy, a banker of Northampton,

acquired it and associated with it a book-selling business which he had also in the town. On giving up work in 1792 he sold both to William Birdsall, a Yorkshireman by birth, who had settled there, and in this family it has remained ever since. We spoke before of the varied nature of the work carried out by country binders, and on Messrs Birdsall's premises we find a department of manufacturing stationery, another for the wholesale paper trade, a third for commercial bindings in which are included certain special registered bindings patented for serial work, such as the 'Stronghold' and 'Biblia fortis,' suitable for free libraries where the usage is rough and constant, and lastly, one set apart for highly finished leather and vellum books. The works are always kept in the highest state of efficiency, and the workmen are encouraged to excel in skilled and conscientious work. Many of these have passed a lifetime there, and though the business is not of a co-operative character, a bonus is distributed to the older

and more efficient workers at the end of the year.

Mr. Chivers, of Bath, has brought an unusual amount of originality and enthusiasm into the service of his craft. His father was a binder there before him, and the son, after working with Chatelain in London, decided to settle in his native town. For some time his specialty was a binding for public libraries patented under the name of 'Duro-flexile,' and this, together with other library appliances, brought him a connexion with librarians all over the country who were occupied with the problems presented by the particular nature of their work. He has brought considerable invention to bear upon these problems, and in certain cases it is not likely that a more satisfactory solution will be found than that which he has introduced. Besides these practical matters he has made certain styles of decorating book covers especially his own, and one of these he has developed with considerable success. This consists in a scheme

whereby designs are painted on paper and then covered with transparent vellum, so that there is no limit to the colour effect that may be produced. We have already mentioned James Edwards, of Halifax, who settled in 1784 as a bookseller in Pall Mall, and whose love of books caused him to direct his coffin to be made from the shelves of his libraries. In 1785 he took out a patent 'for embellishing books bound in vellum and making drawings on the vellum which are not liable to be defaced by destroying the vellum itself.' The description further contained in the patent has never been found possible of imitation, which may or may not have been intentional on his part. The British Museum shows a Prayer-Book bound by him in this style for Queen Charlotte, wife of George III., which has likewise a foredge painting beneath the gold. His patterns were frequently Etruscan in character; but as his range of decoration was limited and the vellum he used insufficiently transparent, his books are only

of moderate interest. Mr. Chivers' plan is a much simpler one, and if the designs are given into the hands of artists, very original results can be obtained. The French have one binder—M. Carayon—who is famed for a class of book cover that gives something of the same effect. The best-known painters both in water colours and black and white are employed to decorate the white vellum that clothes so sumptuously the finely illustrated books that his countrymen admire so much. These will, however, stand no usage of any kind, and can only be kept in cases carefully made for their protection. The vellucent work of Mr. Chivers being beneath the vellum runs no risk of deterioration and can stand even more than the usual wear and tear. Sometimes it appears as if the colours chosen were too strong, producing in some cases rather the effect of the highly coloured supplements that appear at Christmas in our illustrated papers; but that, of course, is not a criticism that belongs to the method, but is rather a

counsel of perfection for a more delicate application of that method. The desire for colour has appeared constantly in the history of bookbinding. We see it first in the Venetian books brilliantly painted in lacquer in the Persian and Saracenic style taken from Arabian manuscripts, then in the strapwork coloured with a varnished incrustation like enamel, the best of which, French and Italian, is found about the middle of the sixteenth century. This method has proved very perishable, and has never been revived. Later on we get the inlaying of coloured leathers, which reached its most interesting development in the eighteenth century, and has retained its hold on public taste ever since. The earlier painted strapwork was freely copied in mosaics of leather; and when we come to deal with present-day French bindings, we shall see the new style of inlaid decoration to which these have given place. The vellucent method of Mr. Chivers is full of delightful possibilities if confined to books to which it is suited, and

when employed in a rather lower colour scheme as suggested. Nor is it necessary for the whole cover to be of vellum, for it is possible to introduce a panel only of the transparent material over a picture, and to incorporate this in the morocco, giving the effect of an enrichment of enamel.

Another style which Mr. Chivers has done much to popularise is calf, embossed and incised and sometimes coloured by hand. In this, as for the vellucent bindings, he draws freely upon outside talent. Mr. H. Granville-Fenn is general artistic adviser, and Miss Alice Shepherd and Mr. S. Poole have long been associated with him in the execution of this work.[1] Some of the 'cuir

[1] The process of leather cutting and embossing is briefly as follows. The design is first drawn on paper, then transferred to tracing paper and traced through from this on to the leather, which is shoe-calf prepared for the purpose as to quality and thickness. The process is very much like beaten and chased silver work, except that the soft leather has to be reinforced at the back with a cement, and while this cement is hardening the front has to be modelled. It is a mistake to suppose that this work is of a delicate nature. If the

ciselé' that has come down to us from the past, and which originated in Germany, is very fine in character, as any one can see who studies some excellent examples exposed in the British Museum. There seems no reason why it should not have a satisfactory revival; in France, indeed, this has already taken place, as we shall see later on, but in England there is still too much 'prettiness' associated with it, and one is apt to think it more suitable for card-cases and blotting-cases than for bindings. What results it can yield when the design is severe and dignified and the treatment finely chiselled may be observed on the *Pantheologia* by Rainesius de Pisa, a folio dated about 1475, one of the Museum books just mentioned.

The last illustrations in this chapter show

design is fairly evenly distributed over the decorated space, handling and the slight friction a well-bound book is subject to in the course of time enhance its appearance. Again, by tracing and cutting the design without embossing it a different surface is obtained, while the application of gold tooling and that of various colour tints are additions of treatment that give considerable scope to the finisher.

15. Bound by the Oxford University Press.

16. Bound by the Oxford University Press.

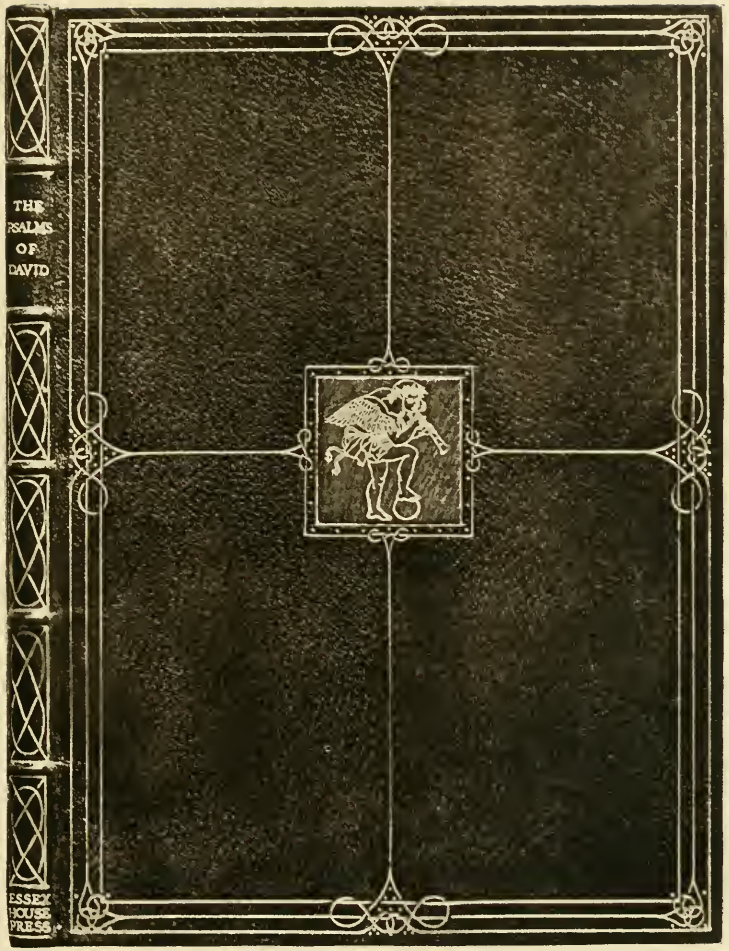
work from the binding department of the Oxford University Press. The Press itself, located in special buildings in Oxford built in 1830, is divided into two parts, one devoted chiefly to the printing of Bibles and Prayer-Books, the other to classical, scientific and general printing. It is entirely self-contained, making its own paper, ink, type, stereo- and electro-plates. The University type foundry is the oldest in England, and at the paper mills at Wolvercote, near Oxford, the famous India paper is made which has brought very great changes into the book trade. The publishing and binding house, lately at Amen Corner in the City, is now at St. Dunstan's House, Fetter Lane, and thither are sent all the books from the Press as soon as printed. In the Paris Exhibition of 1900 the Press showed a considerable number of decorated bindings in addition to the exhibits from the other departments. The Oxford Press designs are very varied in character and include some excellent

inlays; they are made by the more artistic among the workmen, and speak highly for the level of taste attained in the bindery.

III

In bringing forward what may be called the younger generation of binders, it is natural to speak first of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson as the source from which they have drawn much of their inspiration. His work, however, is not represented here, as it would be discourteous to go against his wishes in the matter. Whatever may be the reasons for his change of attitude in this respect, he has in the past done a great deal to introduce his work personally to the public and to explain his method and ideals. The pages of the *British Bookmaker*, a trade journal no longer in existence, the *English Illustrated Magazine*, the *Fortnightly Review*, testify to his former willingness that his work should be known and appreciated. He has also been one of the main supporters

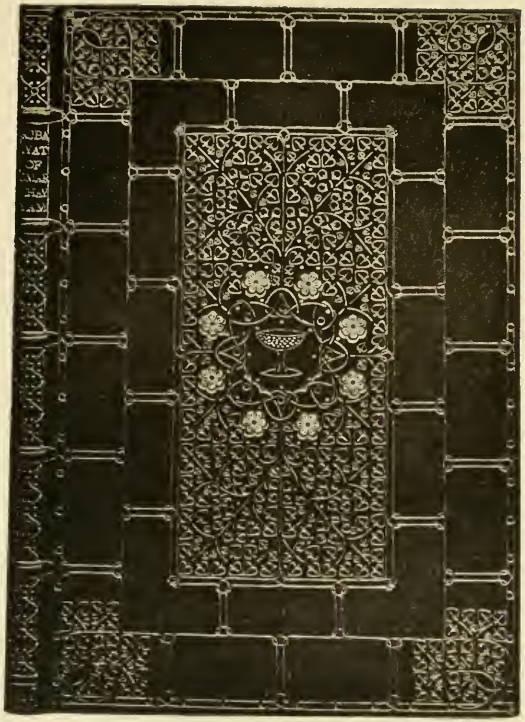
of the Arts and Crafts Society since its inception in 1888, and his books have been the largest contribution to binding in its occasional exhibitions. There too, as well as at the Society of Arts and elsewhere in London and the provinces, he has lectured on the craft, setting forth what he conceives to be its purport both in the limited matter of its processes and achievements and in the wider aspect of its relation to the wants and progress of society. Not long ago he published a book on *Industrial Ideals*, which it is interesting to compare with the collected papers by Mr. William Morris which have appeared on that and kindred subjects. Mr. Morris always held up the ideal of the Middle Ages as the goal towards which to strive. It was a time, he considered, when the processes or means by which life is lived constituted the end of life itself, without seeking for some other end external to them and often incompatible with them. This idea of 'art being the highest function of life' was the gospel to which he never



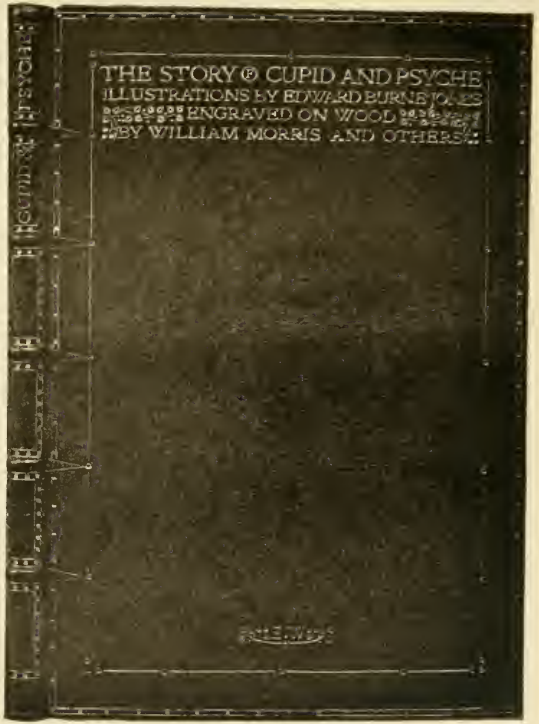
17. Bound by the Guild of Handicraft.

ceased to direct the attention of his followers, and the next step—the attempted re-organization of life into conditions that enable art to realize itself—thus followed as a matter of course. As a protest against the mechanical exploitation of the arts for the sake of commercial success in its worst sense, and with the attendant evils of excessive competition, such a creed is most valuable, and has already had an important effect on the decorative arts which we trust may be permanent. But it would seem mistaken in theory and impossible of practice to attempt a reversion to mediaeval ideals with the wholly altered conditions of production, distribution and mode of living that are now part and parcel of modern life. A crusade against the existing conditions in which works of art are produced must, one would think, if its criticism is to be operative, find some way of including in its scheme of regeneration the great movements of commercial life which is one of the features of the age, and which even the

most optimistic could hardly hope to stem. Here and there an individual may achieve a career somewhat in accordance with mediaeval ways, content with the limitations imposed by this ideal; but except in such isolated instances it does not seem possible to return to the practice of the past, when, as Mr. Lethaby says, 'the designer of a gold cup made it and sold it over the counter, and the art was thrown in like a Christmas almanack.' Here comes in the problem mentioned in a previous chapter. If, on the one hand, there is too much tendency for the designer to be occupied only in planning ornament for others to execute with the result that a certain inevitableness is nearly always wanting in the finished product, yet it may be better for a skilled workman to carry out the views of an artist rather than try and evolve variants from a few types set before him. In the frequent advocacy of a revival of past conditions which would benefit the workman, there is one point that seems



18. Bound by Douglas Cockerell.



19. Bound by Douglas Cockerell.

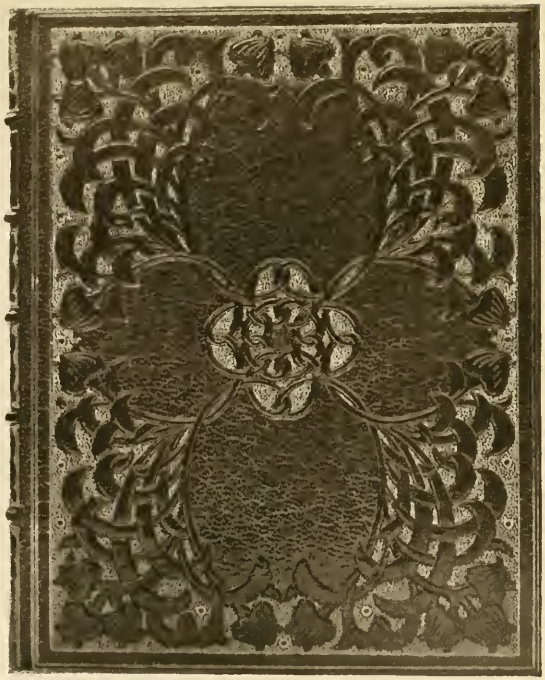
always left unnoticed—a point of great importance; and that is the stringent means taken in those days to protect the purchaser also. In the scholarly little introduction called 'Art in the Netherlands' which Mr. W. H. James Weale contributed to the Catalogue of the picture exhibition held at Bruges in 1902, he gives a concise account of the conditions under which alone a man could become a painter in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and what held good for painting held good also for the minor arts of life. As long as the craftsman belonged to the guild of his craft, he was bound by its rules to carry out his work honestly and conscientiously, to use good materials, and to beautify it as far as he was able. The corporation arranged for the education of its members. They were apprenticed to masters responsible both for their technical efficiency and the fulfilment of their duties of citizenship. Each was bound to the other; the apprentice was to give zeal in his service and the master to

impart all he knew of his trade. Once the apprenticeship at an end, the youth could work, as what would now be known as an 'improver,' with any master he liked, and in any town that he chose. Later on, in order to become a master, he had to present himself before the heads of the guild and give proofs of efficiency, promise obedience to the rules of the corporation, and swear to carry on his work well and honestly. Observe, however, that, although a master, he remained all his life under the control of the governing body of the corporation, the members of which could enter his shop at any moment, seize his materials if of inferior quality, confiscate them, and inflict punishment upon him. Lastly, in disputes between himself and his clients the guild was called in to decide between them. We can imagine no condition less in touch with the schemes of modern and social democracy, which so often deal exclusively with the needs of the worker and neglect those both of the employer and the consumer.

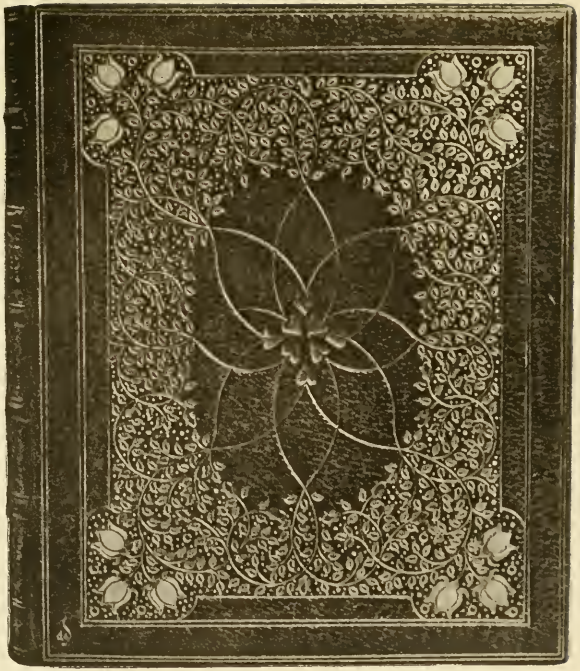
20. Bound by F. Sangorski and G. Sutcliffe.

In connexion with this topic, mention should be made of Mr. C. R. Ashbee's experiment with the Guild and School of Handicraft. It began its existence at Essex House in East London, and, after fourteen years, in May 1902, removed to Chipping Campden, a small Cotswold village where the wool trade flourished during the Middle Ages and the silk trade in the eighteenth century. The aim of the Guild is set forth in a little pamphlet, distributed to visitors at the Dering Yard Gallery, 67A New Bond Street, where the work of the school is annually exhibited. It need only be said here that its object is to set a higher standard of craftsmanship by liberating the workman from the restrictions of the trade shop, and directing his independence away from purely individualistic efforts on to lines of art service to the community, and that it is conducted co-operatively, the men having an interest and a share in the concern and its government. While recognizing the importance of what a man does and the

conditions under which he does it, both to himself as a citizen and to the community for which he labours, the Guild endeavours to strike a mean between the socialism that cares only for the worker and the commercialism that disregards him and his idealistic as well as material needs. The work carried out at Chipping Campden is very various, and includes furniture, metal work, jewellery, printing and binding. After Mr. Morris's death, Mr. Ashbee acquired the plant hitherto in use at the Kelmscot Press, and began a series of books, first in a Caxton type and later from a fount of his own design. Binding followed almost as a matter of course on these issues from the Essex House Press; and in connexion with it, besides the ordinary plain-tooled leather bindings, excellent in restrained ornament, he has revived certain fifteenth-century styles for which he has a special predilection, and which include the use of enamels and wooden boards, the latter often carved in low relief. The bindings, though



21. Bound by de Sauty.

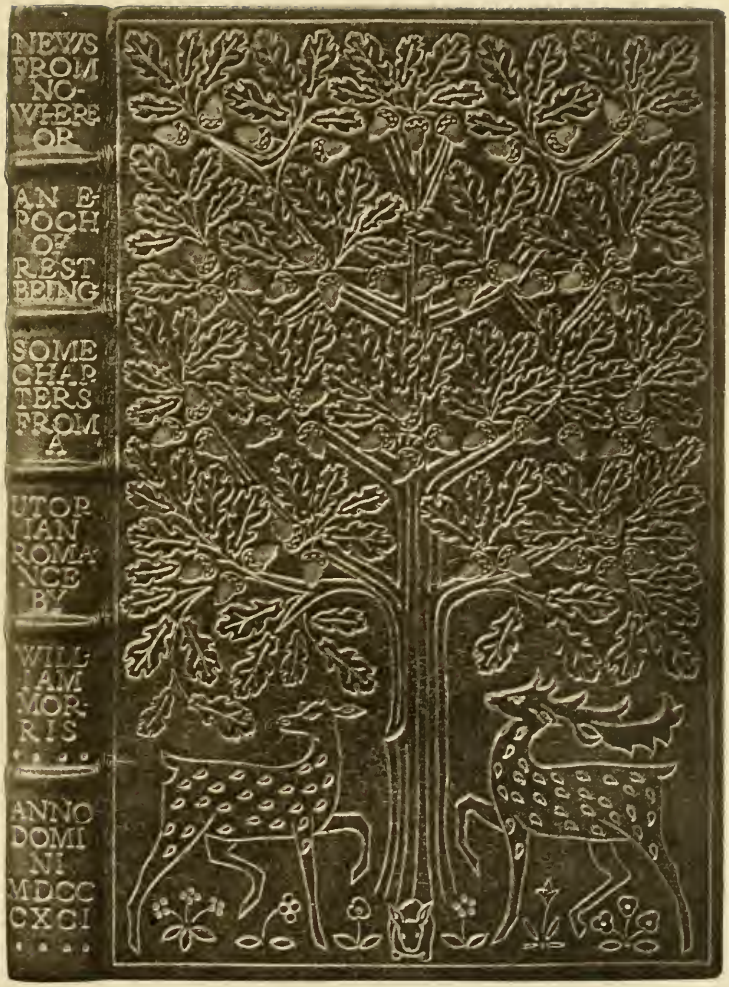


22. Bound by de Sauty.

designed for the most part by Mr. Ashbee, are carried out by Miss Power, who is in the main responsible for them. These books raise again the question whether such deviations from the ordinary paths are legitimate attempts to enlarge the limitations of the binder's art. The ultimate serviceable use of a book should ever be kept in sight, and must in the end determine the matter. Leather and vellum, tooled with a few fine stamps, disposed with taste and restraint, will always remain the best coverings for books, because they are unobtrusive and can be pleasantly handled and easily disposed. Work that is embossed, enamelled, carved, or even too decorative in colour for unlimited production, can only be desired as occasional specimens of interest in themselves, and as exceptions proving the rule.

Mr. Douglas Cockerell, a pupil of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, has written the first of a new series of technical handbooks on the artistic crafts which is a model of the

kind and should prove the text-book for all future binders. It is, no doubt, the outcome of some years' teaching at the County Council School in Regent Street, where, for many years, he did excellent work in training the younger men to an intelligent interest in the various processes of their craft. No craft can be well learned anywhere but in a practical workshop; and he considers the value of class teaching to be limited to helping those engaged in a trade, and that such help is of great value in giving higher ideals and encouraging experimental work. From the beginning Mr. Cockerell has been specially interested in the repairing of books and in the preservation of old covers, and has given his pupils some training in all that relates to the care of books. There are numbers of old bindings that after four hundred years of wear and tear are still capable of fulfilling their original purpose of protection, with a little help from modern hands. To give a new lease of life to fine old books is really



23. Bound by Miss Adams.

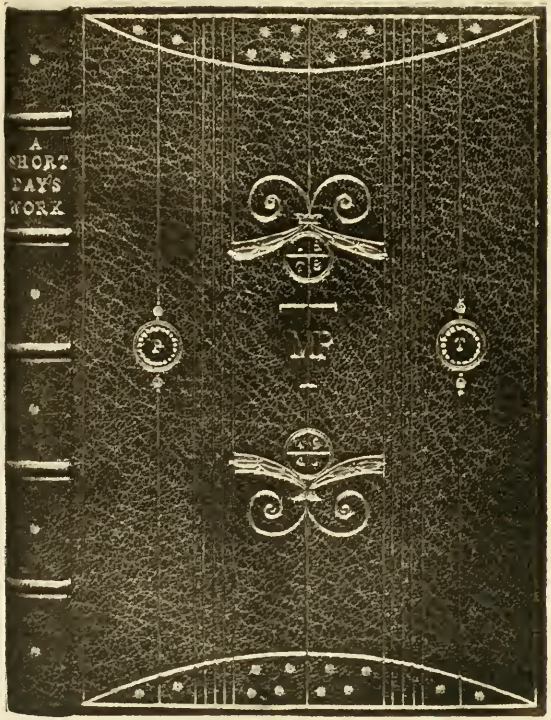
of far greater importance than the continual production of new and pretty bindings. Mr. Cockerell's original work is well known both here and in America, and there is luckily a great deal of it that is simple as well as highly decorated. It is comparatively easy to do the latter; but a plain binding that yet has the stamp of the maker's individuality is a very exceptional achievement, and in work of that character Mr. Cockerell is unsurpassed.

Mr. F. Sangorski and Mr. G. Sutcliffe, who were formerly with Mr. Cockerell, have started a bindery of their own, and are engaged both in teaching and doing varied work of a pleasant character. Trained in the methods of Mr. Cockerell at the Technical School at 316 Regent Street, Mr. Sutcliffe now controls the teaching for the County Council at its branch establishment in Camberwell, and Mr. Sangorski that of the Northampton Institute in Clerkenwell.

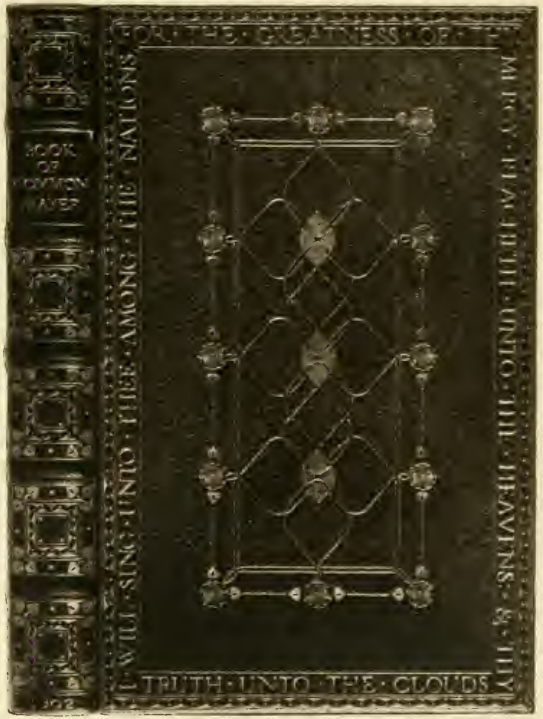
Mr. de Sauty is another young binder,

and his work is of considerable merit. His inlays are distinguished for the taste shown in the association of colours, and his finishing has some of the brilliant qualities of the French school, seen particularly in the finely studded tooling of which he seems particularly fond. He has now the post formerly held by Mr. Cockerell.

In concluding this sketch of Bookbinding in England as it appears to-day, we must not omit to speak of the entrance recently effected by women in many of the handicrafts, and notably in the one under consideration. Quite a number are now trying to make a livelihood out of bookbinding; and possibly, therefore, a few words less of criticism than of counsel may not come amiss. It may be said that there are certain conditions absolutely necessary for successful achievement, quite apart from financial gain, which is another matter. The first of these is a workshop training, which, though impossible some years ago, is now no longer so within certain limits;



24. Bound by Miss MacColl.

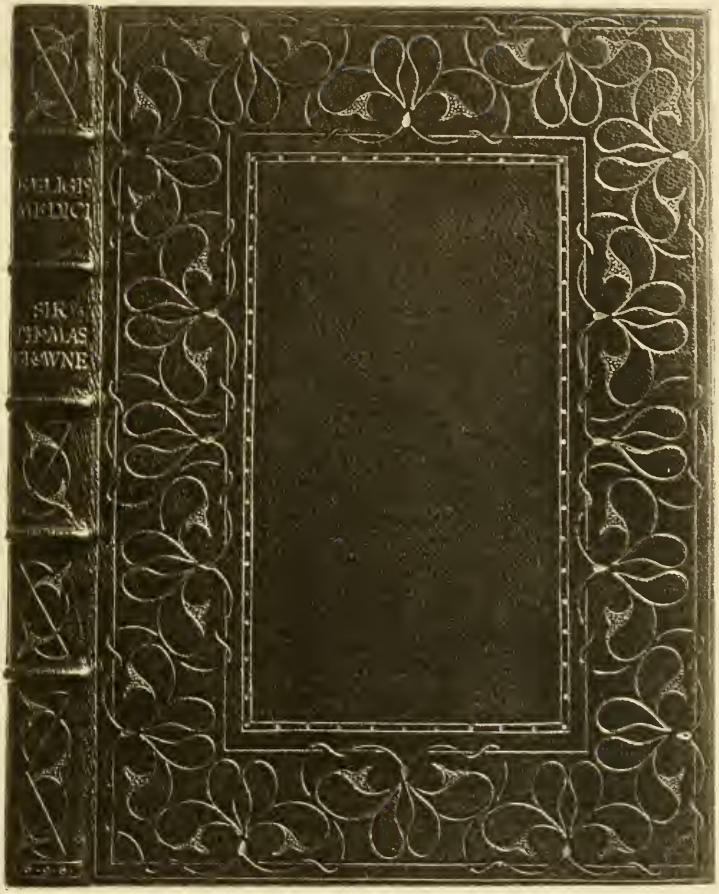

BOOK
OF
COMMON
PRAYER
FOR · THE · GREATNESS · OF · THY
MERCY · REACHETH · UNTO · THE · HEAVENS · & · THY
I · WILL · SING · UNTO · THEE · AMONG · THE · NATIONS
TRUTH · UNTO · THE · CLOUDS

25. Bound by Miss Alice Pattinson.

that is to say, there are one or two binders with small workshops who undertake to give women systematic teaching for a limited time. In a workshop they will see a variety of work that they will miss if taught privately, and they will learn the habit of rapid and dexterous manipulation of tools and materials without which it is impossible to work quickly enough for a profitable return upon the outlay. A second most necessary qualification is that they should have the physique for standing and working at a bench during the hours of an ordinary working day. For binding is not like other less specialized crafts that can be taken up at odd hours and laid aside with equal facility, but needs concentration of mind as well as sureness of hand. A third element in the desirable equipment is a certain faculty of imagination controlled by right feeling or good taste, so that the results of workmanship have the note of individuality without eccentricity. In art as in life, personality is the one thing need-

ful, and we may fairly look to women to show the realization of it that can hardly be expected from those working in the stereotyped grooves of production.

And what is to be said of binding as a means of livelihood? Experience has shown that properly trained women can do as good binding as men, though not upon large and heavy work, and if they do it well enough some of them can earn a fair wage, while if they fail to reach a high standard they had better for all practical purposes let it alone. But to hold out any inducement to the woman who really needs bread-and-butter to take up binding as a lucrative employment, as is done in some quarters, should be characterized with the severity it deserves. Many women need but an addition to their income, and to such, if they are willing to incur the expense of training and plant, and if they realize the experimental nature of the undertaking, binding may be recommended as a sufficiently pleasant occupation. Whether finan-



26. Bound by Miss Maude Nathan.

cial success comes, however, or not, must depend upon the amount of work turned out, on the originality and finish with which it is executed, and last, but not least in importance, on the finding of a market. Booksellers are now so overstocked with so-called artistic bindings of moderate merit, and it may also be said of moderate price, that they are not eager to accept those of average quality at the more than average price that many women expect their work to command. A market can always be found for the best of everything; but as far as bindings are concerned it is certainly at present overstocked with the second best, and attention may well be directed to other branches of decorative work. There are more than enough half-trained workers, both male and female; and it would be a most undesirable result of what in itself is so eminently desirable—the opening of the artistic crafts to women—if there were to be a great deal of inferior work put into circulation obviously from the hands of those who have never left the

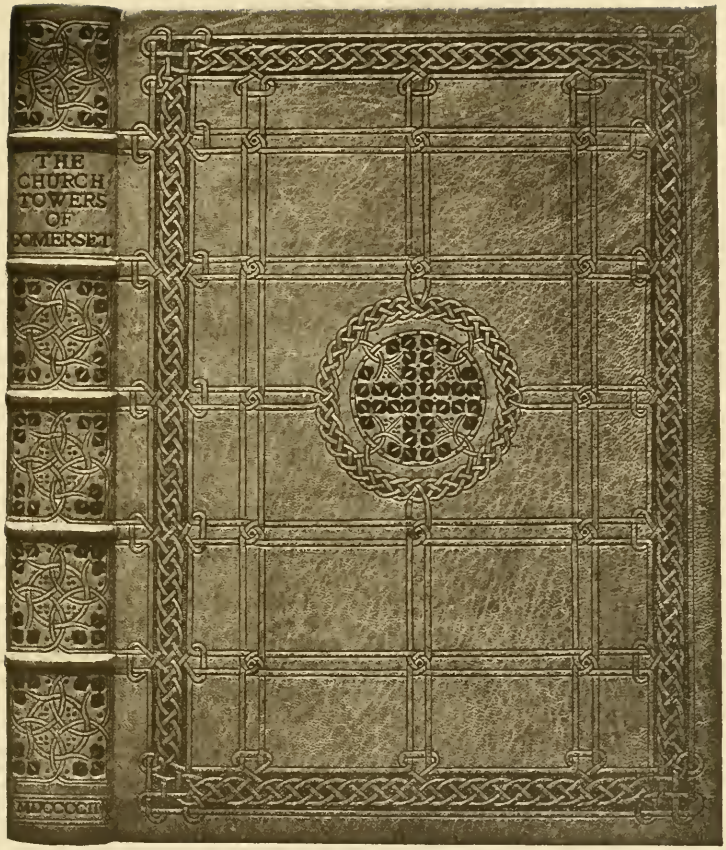
amateur stage. Women make a mistake, too, in specializing in the production of decorated bindings. It is no doubt a right principle to take the everyday things of life and decorate them rather than invent useless ones for the purpose. It has, however, this disadvantage, that it has now become almost impossible to get any of these homely things made with the severe simplicity of mere purposefulness. If one does not want the useless things, at least one need not buy them; but it seems hard that the necessary ones should become the *corpora vile* on which the professed decorator exercises his too frequently disordered imagination. One is unfortunately as little likely nowadays to find a plain pepper-pot as one is to find a bound book on which there is not some flower sprawling over its cover in a meaningless attempt to be Japanese in sentiment. We want to get rid of the affectation of contorted pattern and have more of the plain things of life plainly made. As far as bindings are concerned, in addition to this

27. Bound by Miss Woolrich.

much-desired simplicity, there is, as has been said above, far more important and useful work to be done than pattern making, in the repairing and preserving of old books and records. An instance of this may be seen at the present moment in an extensive matter undertaken by Mr. Cockerell for the Middlesex County Council. A large number of their ancient Sessions Books, many of them crumbling to pieces, are being put in a condition for reference, the whole business of mending being done by women under the direction formerly of Miss Wilkinson and now of Miss M'Ewan both pupils of Mr. Cockerell. Again, many more women might adventure starting a business in the country or in a provincial town. In America there is hardly a centre where there is any interest shown in books which has not a woman binder who has probably been trained by Mr. Cobden-Sanderson. We are glad to notice that Miss Adams has a bindery at Broadway, that Miss Paget is at Farnham doing good honest work of a

comparatively simple nature, and that Miss Philpot has established herself at Cambridge. Space forbids more than a few illustrations from the work of women binders, numerous as they now are. Miss MacColl's books have for some time excited interest both on account of the character of her brother's designs and her manner of executing them by means of a small wheel, which is an attempt to overcome the restrictions of the finisher's ordinary methods. Miss Nathan, Miss Pattinson and Miss Stebbing are all doing well-considered and tasteful work on sound principles. Of those at work in Scotland we need only mention the names of Miss Jessie King, Miss McClure and Miss Jane F. Hamilton, Miss Alice Gairdner and Miss Agnes Watson of Glasgow, as their work has recently been specially dealt with in a paper by Mr. Lewis F. Day.

In conclusion, it is necessary to keep in mind that binding is but one of the sub-crafts that contribute to the production of



28. Bound by Miss Philpot.

books. Of late each of these has pursued its own often faulty ideals regardless of its relationship to the other contributory crafts. The paper-maker, the printer and the binder would be more likely to work intelligently if they had some mutual knowledge of each other's needs and limitations. The habit has been growing for some time of looking on the binding of a book as the most important thing in connexion with it. But the binder of the future, if his work is to be an effective contribution to decorative art, must look on the book itself as the unit of interest, the thought, embodied in typography and illustration, constituting a whole to which in the decorated cover he adds, not an essential part, but as it were the crown or coping-stone.

MODERN FRENCH BINDING

MODERN FRENCH BINDING

I

In the spring of 1902 there took place in Paris the first of the exhibitions to which the new Galliera Museum is henceforth to be devoted. This Gallery, still unknown to a considerable number of English visitors, was built by Ginain in the style of the French Renaissance, and is all that a small museum should be. Its history is briefly as follows. In 1878, the Duchesse de Galliera presented to the City of Paris a plot of ground situated in the Rue Pierre-Charron by the Trocadero avenue, and undertook to erect upon it a suitable building in which to house the collection of works of art that she proposed leaving to the nation. Before, however, it was finished, and in consequence

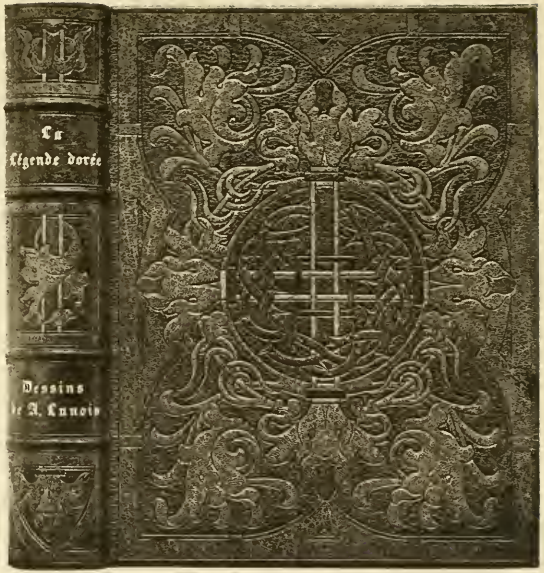
of the political events that resulted in the expulsion of the heads of princely houses from France, the Duchess had made a will in which she left her pictures to her native town of Genoa, only making provision for the completion of the Gallery. She died in 1888, and soon afterwards Paris found herself in possession of this fine museum, surrounded with gardens, and admirably appointed in the architectural detail so well understood by the French, but empty of all the treasures it was to have housed. What was to become of it? The municipal council decided that it should be devoted to industrial art, forming a sort of supplement to the Carnavalet Museum, and the necessary furnishing was undertaken with a view to that end. It was formally opened in 1895, but for five years after that remained practically empty, though purchases were made from successive Salons of different kinds of decorative art and disposed among the vacant rooms to form a nucleus for future acquisitions. In 1900 the Council,

29. Bound by Marius Michel.

after much deliberation, decided that the museum should be devoted to periodical industrial exhibitions, and the first one, of a miscellaneous character, took place in the following year. Its distinctive feature consisted in what was an entirely new departure for France, namely, that every craftsman signed his work instead of being represented only in the name of the firm which employed him. This idea, to which we have now long been accustomed through the efforts of the Arts and Crafts Society, was a very novel one for our neighbours, and is to be adopted henceforth in all the Galliera exhibitions. The initiative met with such undoubted success that the Germans proceeded at once to start a museum at Mulhouse on similar lines. The organizing jury of the Council, which includes the foremost men of letters, artists and critics, next decided that the yearly exhibitions should each be devoted to a special branch of decorative art. The first of these was inaugurated in May 1892, in an admirably planned show of modern bind-

ings comprising the latest developments, and, it must be added, eccentricities of ornamental book covers. The number sent in necessitated the largest gallery being set aside for their reception, and was a testimony to the confidence felt by the binders that merit would be the sole criterion. And indeed, though much interesting work was rejected, not only were the well-known artists well represented, such as Michel, Mercier, Gruel, Ruban, Canape, Lortic, Carayon, etc., but room was found for the curious vellum covers of Pierre Roche and the incised and modelled leather of Lepère with whom Michel and others so happily collaborate. The impression made upon the visitor was at once one of careful selection and admirable disposition. In contrast to the wretched instalment offered by the great Exhibition of 1900, the work of every binder was seen to the best advantage, the eye was not fatigued by too many show-cases, and the harmony of surroundings left nothing to be desired. The display of works of art is in

30. Bound by Marius Michel.



31. Bound by Marius Michel.

itself a study, and we could undoubtedly learn much from the French in the excellent arrangement of their galleries. But what a strange transition from that great room in the Bibliothèque Nationale, where rest at last the classic specimens of work that may without exaggeration be included among the fine arts, to this most modern of collections! When in the Bibliothèque Nationale we are reminded of that exquisite sonnet of Hérédia—

VÉLIN DORÉ

Vieux maître relieur, l'or que tu ciselas
Au dos du livre et dans l'épaisseur de la tranche
N'a plus, malgré les fers poussés d'une main franche
La rutilante ardeur de ses premiers éclats.

Les chiffres enlacés que liait l'entrelacs
S'effacent chaque jour de la peau fine et blanche;
A peine si mes yeux peuvent suivre la branche
De lierre que tu fis serpenter sur les plats.

Mais cet ivoire souple et presque diaphane,
Marguerite, Marie, ou peut-être Diane,
De leurs doigts amoureux l'ont jadis caressé;

Et ce vélin pâli que dora Clovis Ève
Évoque, je ne sais par quel charme passé,
L'âme de leur parfum et l'ombre de leur rêve.

Here in the Galliera we realize how complete is the revolution now finally effected by a people who clung long and faithfully to the traditions of a style made famous by Grolier and by the Eves, Le Gascon and Derôme. All through the nineteenth century these traditions were adhered to, carried out by Thouvenin, Simier and Capé, by Chambolle, Duru, Trautz and Cuzin, the inspired copyists of the great masters. These looked on originality as the most dangerous of innovations and a sort of disloyalty to the precedents handed down to them across the ages. Nevertheless the impending change was slowly and surely making way, fostered by Lortic and Marius Michel, the latter through his writings as well as in his work. Henri Marius Michel followed in his father's steps: his essay on *L'ornamentation des reliures modernes* showed clearly the direction taken by the modern school; while the sumptuous book, *La reliure du XIX siècle*, by Henri Béraldi, who is both a patron and collector of dis-

32. Bound by Léon Gruel.

tinction, may be said to have given final expression to the movement as a whole. Bookbinding, in common with larger subjects, has its bibliography. A glance over the names of the books that relate to it published during the last half-century shows well enough how interest has been displaced from the historic schools to those which have initiated entirely new forms of decoration as applied to book covers. If, then, we are struck by the contrast between past and present as regards the nature of this application of art to bindings, we are equally impressed by the contrast between the position of the binder then and now. It is no wonder that the small world of binders and their patrons in Paris were proud of the position of honour assigned to their craft in 1902. They inaugurated a series of exhibitions, which is to include ivories, lace, jewellery, furniture—every art, in fact, to which there attaches the personality that can only come from having at some time had as its exponents 'the masters

of those who know.' Even so late as 1870 the name of Trautz was unknown, not only to the ordinary public, but to such collectors as Eugène Paillet and Quentin Bauchart, though he had been producing admirable work for thirty years. In 1878 he was decorated with the Legion of Honour, the first time that any such distinction had been offered to a binder. It was only after his retirement and subsequent return to business at the age of sixty that his fame grew till it culminated in a sort of worship that is inconceivable outside of France. Nowadays the many means of publicity would render such a state of things quite impossible. It is an age in which every one longs to see himself reflected in print or show-case; and if the workman in any line does not himself take measures for bringing his efforts to the light, there is a class whose chief occupation it is to be the discoverers of hidden talent, and to act as middlemen between the producer and the public. In Paris, binders

have now a status that is looked upon with surprise and envy in England. They are still, it is true, mostly congregated on the left bank of the Seine, the quarter which was formerly in the parish of Saint-André-des-Arts, and where their guild had its church of that name, now no longer in existence. Up to five-and-twenty years ago there was hardly one that lived elsewhere, and even now it is the exception to find a binder in the more fashionable quarter. One has to climb high to reach their ateliers, invariably of very modest dimensions and where but few workmen are employed. The extensive businesses that we know in London hardly exist in Paris, and M. Gruel's is probably the only one employing a large number of hands. For the most part two or three 'forwarders' and the same number of 'finishers' will suffice for the yearly output of a single workshop. But to these ateliers go personally the great collectors who are wealthy patrons, to discuss in detail different points of design

and technique with a connoisseurship that is reserved with us for painting or sculpture. To the unstinted help and intelligent appreciation afforded by such a class of amateurs is undoubtedly due the superior position of the artistic crafts in France. Many of the bindings in the Galliera were achieved at a cost of two thousand francs, and others for three and even four thousand. There are two papers entirely devoted to the craft—*La Reliure*, which is the organ of the Chambre Syndicale, an association of master binders founded by M. Gruel; and *Le Relieur*, organ of the Chambre Syndicale Ouvrière, which is the corresponding association for workmen. Every year binders can exhibit at each of the rival Salons, at the Société des Artistes Français and the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, and the Galliera Exhibition is but the latest and most effective of the special exhibitions organized from time to time for the exclusive display of their work. There is a desire to make such exhibitions recurrent

33. Bound by Léon Gruel.

34. Bound by Léon Gruel.

every ten years, so as to get a periodic outlook on the art as a whole; but it is unlikely that the next few decades will show such marked characteristics of difference as may be seen by comparison of this collection with that even of 1892 organized by the Cercle de la Librairie. It may, in fact, be suggested that the evolution—or revolution, according to the point of view taken —now at its height, will probably produce a reaction towards that greater sobriety of treatment which distinguished the best work of the past. There are, indeed, already signs that the future of binding will not lie in that emancipation from all restrictions of form and material which would seem to be the ideal of some. Precisely what that future will be rests largely, no doubt, with the collectors, who are, as has been indicated, a powerful body in France, largely on the increase. It is they who, like MM. Béraldi, Spencer, Bordes, Villebœuf, Roger, Marx, Claude Lafontaine, Baron de Claye, Louis Barthou, and many

others, not only furnish binders with the means of giving full play to their imagination, but often devote their pens with enthusiasm to introducing new efforts to the numerous body of amateurs who look to them for guidance in matters of taste and are ready enough to follow their initiative.

The modern movement in binding may be said to have sprung out of the new form of book collecting which began about 1870. Up to that time the book-lover had confined himself entirely to eighteenth-century literature. For forty or fifty years there had been a mad rush in the sale-rooms for books of that period, which were then confided to Thouvenin, Simier, or Trautz, who had exercised their skill in marvellous imitations of the past, with an execution often more technically perfect than the originals. There came a time, however, when such works were exhausted —already stored away, that is to say, on the shelves of collectors, the few that occasionally appeared on the market being

only to be had at prohibitive prices. Book-buyers were thus faced with the problem of what was to be their next move. Obviously to create a new taste in books and establish a fresh motive for collecting was a necessity, and a few pioneers decided to set the fashion in illustrated books of the nineteenth century. Léon Conquet, whose reputation as a publisher is associated with the production of many fine works, at once rose to the occasion, and made a name first with his editions of the romantics of the nineteenth century, and then with original editions of contemporary authors. Clients for whom the old tastes had become too rare and costly an indulgence were thus provided with the means of gratifying a new enthusiasm.

In 1874 an association sprang up of about fifty-five collectors who called themselves 'Les amis des livres,' from which sprang the new departure which has had far-reaching results in book production. The members determined that henceforth,

instead of reprints from the past, there should be books specially illustrated and specially produced in small editions for the society, thus reviving the traditions of the days of Grolier and De Thou, when book collectors were also book makers in the best sense of the word. Authors and artists were to collaborate with printers and publishers to produce the perfect work. In this way came into existence *Eugénie Grandet* with the drawings of Dagnan engraved by Le Rat, *Monsieur, Madame et Bébé*, illustrated by Edmond Morin and many another, to which Meissonier, Vierge and Lepère devoted their best efforts. Illustrated books have always presented a special attraction for our neighbours, and this new stimulus gave the most surprising results. Out of it arose, too, all the excessive preoccupation with 'states,' 'papier de chine,' 'papier de japon,' and the like which has been carried to a ridiculous extent. The cult of rarity in all such matters surely reached its highest point

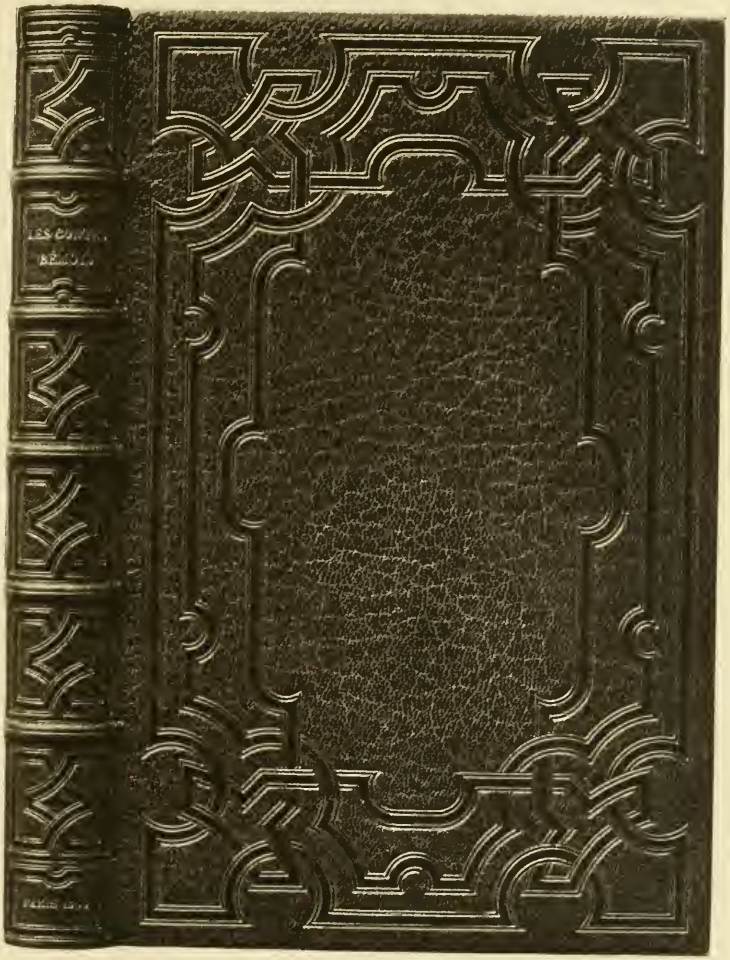
when single copies were specially illustrated for individual collectors, such as the *Fleurs du Mal*, which Paul Gallimond had ornamented with marginal notes by Rodin, and *Les Trois Mousquetaires* with water-colour sketches by Maurice Leloir. The original drawings for *Notre Dame de Paris* by Luc Olivier Merson were bought for 20,000 francs in the open market, while those for *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *Manon Lescaut* by Maurice Leloir fetched the extravagant price of 60,000 francs apiece. These facts are interesting as showing how a small number of genuine book lovers and collectors can constitute a real power, and so far control the character of the book market that they create a new taste which will be recorded in history as the fashion of the age in which they lived. The success of the 'Société des amis des livres' and the response of the editors such as Conquet, Quantin, Testaud, and others, to their initiation, gave such encouragement to amateurs that two new clubs were soon

formed, 'Les amis des livres de Lyon' and 'Les bibliophiles contemporains.' The last was founded by Octave Uzanne with a membership of 160, and ceased to exist only to be re-established as the 'Société des cent bibliophiles,' presided over by M. Eugène Roderigues. Besides all these associations there grew up a class of literature entirely devoted to the instruction of the amateur and the development of his taste in all matters relating to books and their bindings. The earlier literature of binding had been devoted to reproductions of fine specimens from historic collections, but now there appeared in profusion such books as *L'art d'aimer les livres et de les connaître, Connaissances nécessaires à un bibliophile, Les livres modernes qu'il convient d'acquérir, De la reliure, examples à imiter ou à rejeter*, not to mention monthly reviews such as *Le Livre Moderne, L'Art et l'Idée, Le Livre et l'Image*, and the like.

Grolier took the best books he could find, and put them into the best bindings he could

find, and the motto of the collectors of to-day was henceforth to be, as M. Béraldi says in the work previously mentioned, 'le livre de son temps dans la reliure originale de son temps.' Thus out of the new bibliomania grew naturally the reaction in binding with which we are now dealing, and the latest expression of which was seen in the Galliera Museum. These books of fine illustrations must have an appropriate decoration; nothing will do that has served its turn elsewhere, and every amateur stipulates that his binding shall be unique. 'Doublures,' formerly the exception, are now the rule; 'tools' are cut freely for fresh designs, and expense increases with the initiative demanded of the binder, till there seems no limit to what will be paid by the enthusiast. With the craving for novelty there naturally arises the problem, so difficult of solution, concerning the limitations of material and how far audacity may be risked in decoration without extravagance or eccentricity. Cuzin, at the height of his

reputation in 1885, was possibly the first to leave the grooves of tradition and to create a style that he considered appropriate to the books of the time. It consisted for the most part on the outer covers of what the French call *jeu de filets*, or line patterns which are capable of much diversity, while wreaths of flowers inside took the place of the lace patterns that had hitherto formed the ornament of 'doublures.' He also adopted emblematic designs, but these were exceedingly moderate in their symbolism. Marius Michel, too, devoted himself to the research for fresh motives of decoration. In 1889, when eighteen years of age, he had gone into Gruel's atelier and rapidly became a gilder of consummate taste and skill. Ten years later he set up for himself as a finisher, working for Duru, Capé, Chambolle, Cuzin and other binders. For the next twenty years or more his fine talent was devoted to the reproduction of bindings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to perfect copies of Grolier, Le Gascon and others put upon



37. Bound by Mercier.

the books of that time, which were still to be bought freely and at moderate price. Some of his best work is to be seen now in the library at Chantilly; for the late Duc d'Aumale during his exile intrusted large numbers of books to Capé, always accompanied with detailed instructions, and it is these which constitute a large part of the elder Marius Michel's title to fame.

II

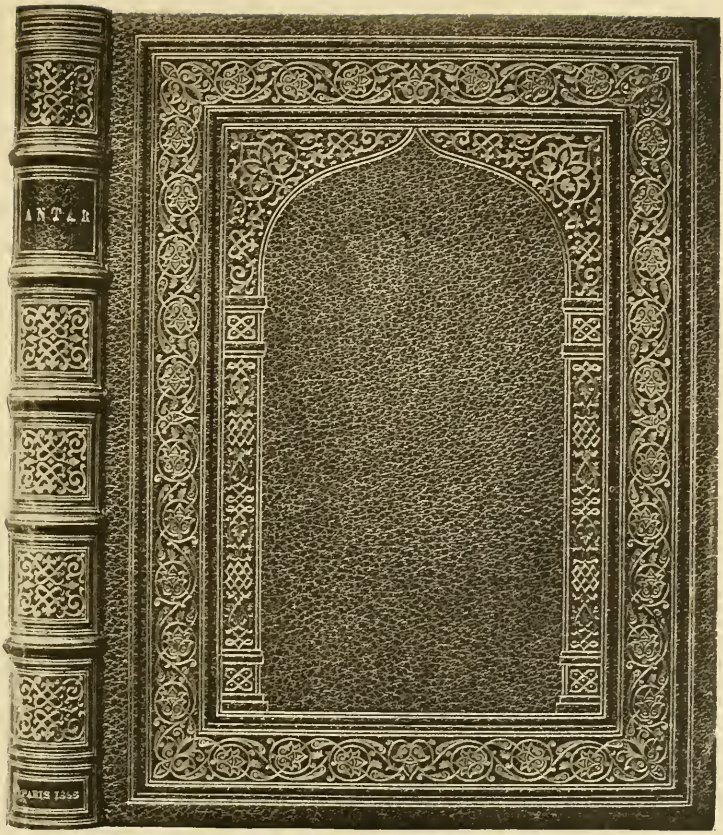
In 1866 Henri Marius Michel, though only twenty years of age, had taken an important position in the business, maintaining the traditions of his father with equal zest and talent; and ten years later the atelier became one for binding in all its branches, a change which enabled Henri to develop his instincts for originality, the firstfruits of which were seen in the incised and modelled leather covers exhibited by him at L'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in 1881. But it was the days of the Trautz mania; and no collector would hear of any binder but Trautz. All the old books must be broken up to be re-covered by him, and even bindings by Bozérian were destroyed to be replaced by those of Trautz. Notwithstanding his enormous output, the workshop was

filled with books which he kept years without touching, and prices continued to increase until the Lacarelle sale in 1888, when there were signs of a change. In one auction-room there were 420 Trautz bindings, in another 380 ; in the library of James de Rothschild there were 2800 items, of which 1400 were in nineteenth-century binding, a thousand of these latter being bound by Trautz. But time brings its revenges ; the place of Trautz is possibly now as much below his deserts as it was then above, while Henri Marius Michel, whose gifts of invention were long ignored as revolutionary, is now at the height of his reputation. M. Béraldi calls him the finest binder since the Renaissance, and there are those who say that the idolatry of Trautz has given place to another and no less extravagant form of hero worship.

Unceasingly occupied with decoration, he gave up the practice of gilding with his own hand, but has continued to execute the Cuir Ciselé, which is one of the styles in

which he first achieved success and in which he is undoubtedly past master. Another style that has been associated with his name since 1885 is that known as *le flore stylisé*, in which flower motives are very slightly conventionalized, but with a certain individuality that makes his work unmistakable, notwithstanding the number of his imitators. Modern French designs of this type are not nearly enough conventionalized for our English taste, where a frankly realistic treatment of natural growths has always been considered unsound.

With the death of Trautz and the rise of the new book-collecting had come the moment for a revolution in binding, and Henri Marius Michel was quickly followed by others. He had, in fact, set the ball rolling, and broken with the long-kept traditions of symmetry, only to let loose a flood of eccentric work for which there was little to be said, and which often had not even the saving grace of technique. He at once became reactionary, and there was a

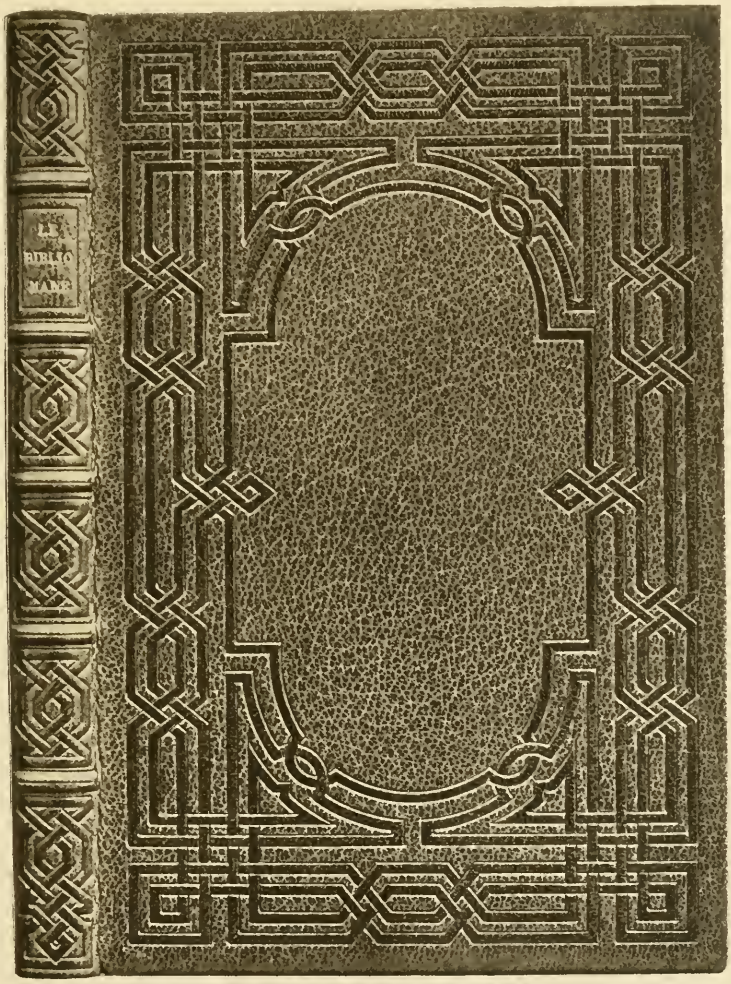


38. Bound by Mercier.

period during which he returned to repeated patterns, simple line borders and the ordinary corner and centre ornaments, rendered with faultless execution. But Marius might turn reactionary for a time; the craze for *l'art nouveau*, as it was termed, was not to be lightly checked. Everything was now pressed into the service for the mere sake of novelty—leather, wood-carving, bronzes, ivories, enamels, miniatures, all found a place until a binding looked like any but what it should be, namely, a thing to be pleasant in the hand and intended to protect a book, without needing protection for itself. Curiosity shops were ransacked for silks and satins as board-linings. Japan yielded its papers and its embossed leathers, flowers of exotic growth lent strange forms to design, and symbolism became rampant. For a time, indeed, emblematic bindings were accepted as the note of the new style which was to mark the century, and in the hands of the indifferent artist became a real terror. There is obviously no such thing as 'new

art' — there is simply art or there is not, and there can be no real art without good craftsmanship. Under pretext of inventing a style that was to belong to the century, all that was done was to perpetuate grotesqueness instead of originality and a burlesque of ideas in their application to binding.

Meanwhile discussion as to the limitations of material naturally became faster and more furious, while the literature on the subject grew apace. In 1896 a controversy arose between Gruel and Michel, the former being supported by Bosquet, a binder holding an important position in the library of Messrs. Hachette and a frequent writer on his craft both in its historical and technical aspects. We, for whom the artistic crafts occupy a very subordinate position, can hardly imagine the heat of discussion that rages round a subject like this in France. The combatants at once range themselves on opposite sides, and the weapons used are all the resources of a language pre-eminently suited

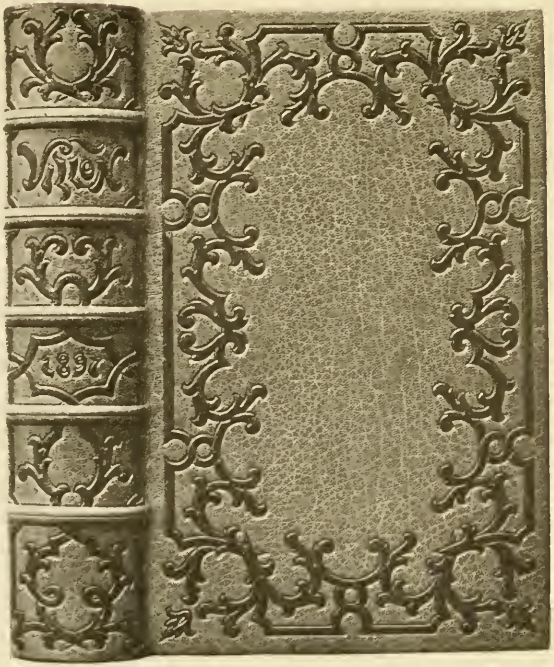


39 Bound by Mercier.

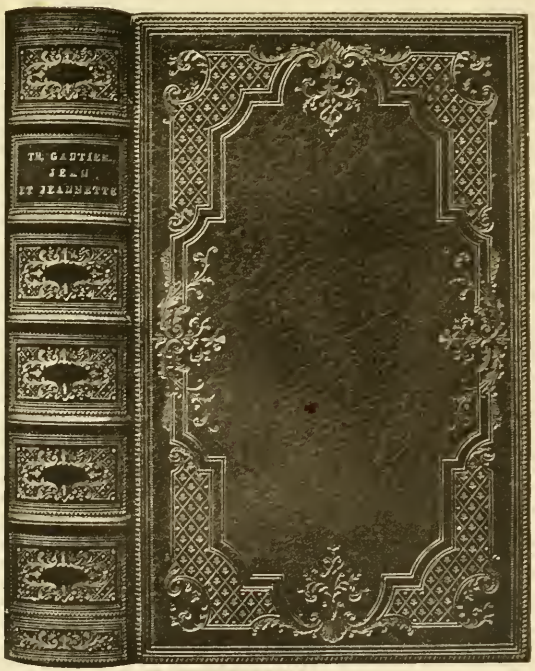
to satire and ridicule, but which somehow seem an armoury out of place on so restricted a battlefield. The Frenchman, however, is never so happy himself, nor, may we say, so entertaining to his neighbours, as when his tongue and his pen are giving effect to the ready wit that seems always at his service.

M. Gruel, whose efforts were directed towards stemming the tide of eccentricity associated with *l'art nouveau*, pointed out the impossibility that a new style should spring up on demand, and recommended a return to the study of past models and a gradual transformation of these into fresh departures. M. Michel replied that a firm break with tradition was necessary in order to avoid the constant repetition of the past and the mixture of styles which had long been the only resource of the ineffective designer. It was necessary, he said, either to return to nature or to seek inspiration from other arts besides binding. So the excitement grew, aided that same year by

an exhibition in the Champ de Mars in which bindings from the school of Nancy, under the direction of Wiener, achieved a notoriety which only fanned the flame. These bindings soon got the nickname of *reliures d'affiche*, and painting was the art from which they derived their inspiration. The book was now looked on as a canvas on which to depict in different-coloured moroccos various scenes from life or nature. In some cases the composition was not even contained on one panel, but strayed over the back to finish on the under cover. The symbolist school with its picture binding has had a considerable vogue, though not in the extreme of violent reproduction of the Nancy school. Michel was himself influenced by it, and both he and Meunier were represented in this same exhibition with subjects in relief and allegorical representations in mosaic. The next development was the sculpture binding, which Michel distinctly furthered by suggesting to Lepère that he should model a cover



40. Bound by Mercier.



41. Bound by Mercier.

for the solitary copy on Japan paper of *Paysages Parisiens*, which he had not only illustrated, but the drawings for which he had also engraved on wood and on copper. Since that time the modelled leather work of Lepère has taken a permanent place among book covers of the day; it is masterly in conception and execution, but would be as fine and more appropriate in a panel framed on a wall than on a binding. The art of the leather worker is one, whether applied to the coffer, the blotter, or the book—it is but the shape and the purpose that defines the appropriateness or inappropriateness of any particular treatment. Marius and Lepère represent the highest point attained by *le cuir incisé*. Artists of their attainments are rare, and it is only such artists who can be tolerated in deviations from the normal and whose inventions can in any sense be held to justify the result. Most collectors content themselves with a specimen or two in their libraries of the sculptured or symbolic or

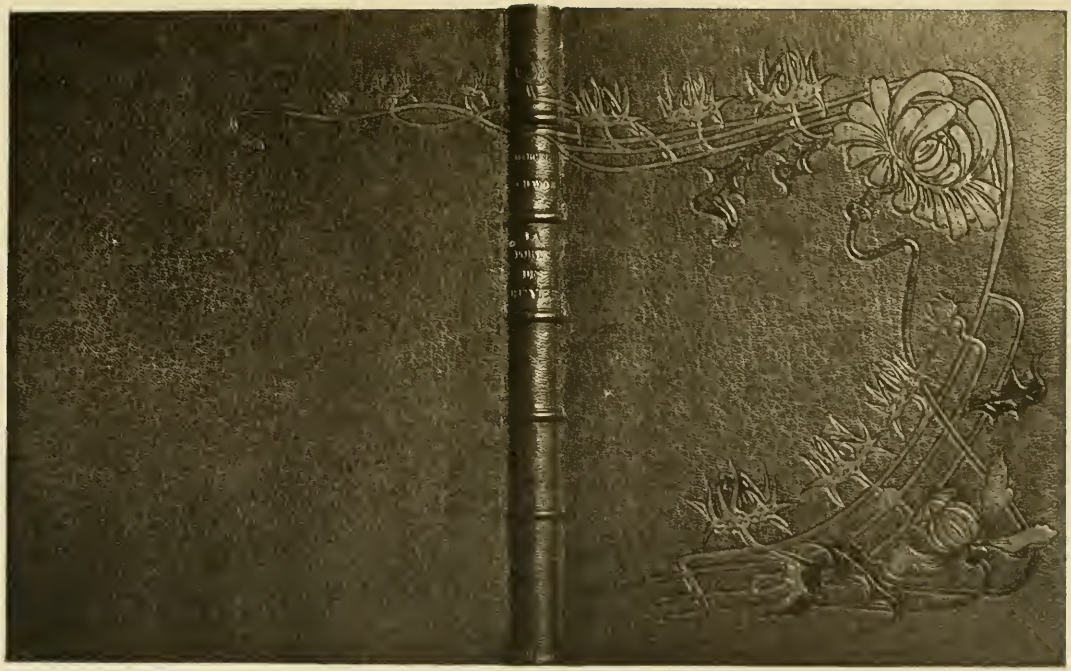
bejewelled binding, be it ever so curious, and turn with satisfaction to the more ordered ways of some modification or another of past traditions.

To turn now from this brief account of the recent developments of French binding to the Galliera exhibition.

The books shown by M. Léon Gruel, whom his son Paul now most ably seconds, were, as may be supposed, of the highest importance. The house is one of the oldest in Paris, having been established in 1811 by Deforge, by whom M. Gruel's father was employed. M. Léon Gruel is an enthusiast who has all the antiquarian as well as the practical knowledge of binding at his fingers' ends. He has a fine collection of old bindings and all sorts of documents relating to them, and some of these he used for his important publication in 1887, *Manuel historique et bibliographique de l'amateur de reliures*, a second instalment of which appeared in 1904. The characteristic of the business has always been the production

of fine editions of liturgies and books of a devotional character, which made it famous long ago, and the bindings of which have always been specially designed and carried out under the direction of M. Gruel. It would have been natural enough had he been content with the great commercial success attained by the house, due to the industry and business qualities of the direction of successive members of his family. But instead of that, it has been his ambition to show that he could with equal success follow every turn taken by the art in the various directions that its recent evolution has demanded. The styles associated with the names of Grolier, the Eves, and le Gascon, are reproduced for those clients who demand them, while the more modern mosaic work, blind-tooled or with gold, is invented and executed with equal facility. One style revived from the past, that of *le cuir incisé*, he has made especially his own, and he treats it in an entirely different manner to that of Marius.

The difference in procedure is briefly this: the incised leather of Marius is not one with the binding, but is a thick piece of calf, worked first by cutting and modelling, and then introduced as a panel sunk into the cover. In Gruel's method the cover is the unit on which the design is modelled while damp, then coloured, and finally hardened. To succeed in this technique needs great delicacy of handling and a constant practice in its methods. It gives plenty of scope for emblematic treatment, which, in the hands of Rossigneux, who designed much of this work in former days for Gruel, was of great artistic merit: at the present time it is executed mainly by a son of M. Bosquet, already spoken of as an important writer on the critical and technical aspects of what is also his own craft. Rossigneux was an architect and designer of surprising talent, who did not hesitate to learn the technicalities of binding that he might devote himself to the decoration of book covers, not only in leather



42. Bound by Ruban.

but in carved wood, for which he was especially famous. M. Léon Gruel is the master of a large workshop to which his men are proud to belong. As President of the Chambre Syndicale he has rendered important services, freely acknowledged, in an insistence on sound teaching and a wise encouragement of the coming generation of binders. The variety of his achievement is a constant surprise even to those who know his versatility, for at each successive exhibition he seems able to add fresh laurels to those which have always surrounded the name of his house.

Émile Mercier has the reputation of being the finest gilder in Paris—*l'artiste impeccable,* as his fellows call him—and he is perhaps the one man in whom they and the public recognize the chief exponent of the best traditions without being in any sense a servile imitator of the past. His individuality is a sympathetic one to all, and even in that little world of keen opposition and personal jealousy he cannot count a single

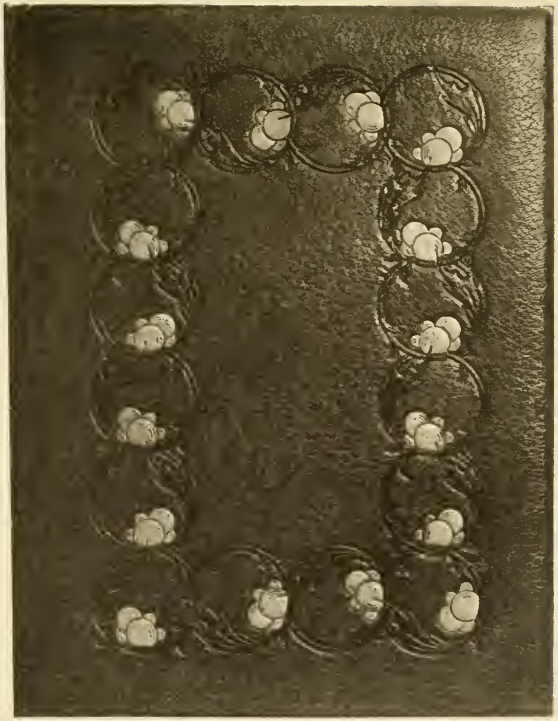
enemy. He took over the atelier of Cuzin in 1890, at the age of thirty-six, on the death of his chief, with whom his relations had long been of the happiest kind, and for whose clients he had executed all the fine designs associated with the name of Cuzin. There is an immense difference in the mere technique of 'tooling,' or gilding as it is always called abroad—a difference almost impossible to put into words, but which is none the less visible to the eye for such distinctions. No French gilding could possibly be mistaken for English, and the reverse is also true. But even among French gilders, where the method prevails of laborious and patient but absolutely certain reworking of the tools in impressions previously made, Mercier stands out as pre-eminent. His work has a vigour and sureness of handling, his gilding a brilliancy and solidity as well as elegance of appearance that are beyond criticism. Though he himself works as hard as ever, he has already brought up in his work-

shop several young finishers of great merit, among whom Mayloender is mentioned as already of fine performance as well as of future promise. Content to quietly excel, Mercier has raised no opposition by any manifesto, and his position of first rank is accepted by all without hesitation as to its justice.

Pétrus Ruban, born at Villefranche in 1851, seemed for some time undecided as to whether he should join the ranks of the traditional or the revolutionary binders. He was at first obviously inspired by the newer decorative attempts of Henri Marius Michel, but has recently left the circle of innovators for the more restricted ranks of the *relieurs-doreurs*, of whom Mercier is the head. Nevertheless M. Ruban's power of invention has enabled him to produce some remarkably fine 'blind-tooled' mosaics, in which striking effects of colour have been managed without a sacrifice of taste. The finish of his craftsmanship is undoubted: no one has finer mastery over tools and

leather, and a faultless treatment of exquisite material distinguishes everything he turns out. It may seem as if too much stress is laid upon this perfection of execution which characterises French work in a way that is unknown to our craftsmen. And it is true that it too often proves a snare, giving an occasion for making difficulties merely to show how they can be triumphed over. But, on the other hand, it is a matter in which we in England are all too negligent. The insistence of late on the comparative unimportance of technique in relation to originality of invention has been disastrous, and the Arts and Crafts Society has, if we may venture to say so, given far too much encouragement to that point of view. There have been bindings shown there which were defective in the very elements of sound 'forwarding'—in the finish that comes of an effective *corps d'ouvrage*, and that should never have been admitted into an exhibition supposed to be especially selective. It may be truly said

43. Bound by Ruban.



44. Bound by Ruban.

that nothing is a work of art unless it attains to a fairly perfect technique, even though the decorative conception may be of considerable value.

Charles Meunier, born in 1866, served a short but energetic apprenticeship to Marius Michel, and then at the age of twenty decided to start for himself. Keen to succeed and make a place among the foremost binders of Paris, he worked with a restless and unceasing effort that might well have proved disastrous to his career. The increasing costliness of whole-binding due to the demands for originality made by amateurs had given an impetus to half-binding which Meunier was not slow to avail himself of. He at once set about supplying the demand, executing some five or six hundred, each with a different emblematic design upon the back. It was the moment when, as has been shown, the symbolist movement was at its height, and the young binder naturally echoed the note of the day. It was the same with the *cuir ciselé*, in which

he quickly attained great skill, doing forty copies alone, with as many different designs of *L'histoire des quatre fils d'Aymon*, a book illustrated by Eugène Grasset, which proved a failure commercially until Marius floated it by means of his fine bindings with motives taken from the illustrations themselves. Meunier has now almost attained the position he coveted. His style has become chastened in accordance with the increasing distaste of eccentricity, and he gives greater care to the details of execution, which, according to French standards, left something to be desired in the early days of his rather too exuberant fancy. Last year he held a special exhibition in New York, showing some seventy specimens in which his decorative skill was extensively represented. His taste in colour may seem somewhat crude and his motives bizarre, but of the mastery over his materials there is no doubt. His snare is that he is a decorator before anything else, and not always sufficiently restrained, or mindful of

45. Bound by Carayon.

the best traditions of decoration in its particular application to binding.

The reputation of M. Carayon is based upon *le cartonnage,* or 'casing' as we call it, and which is with us an inferior form of binding mainly confined to publishers' editions. In this work the cases or covers, whether of cloth or leather, are made separately and the book held to them by the very slight attachment of pasting down the endpapers, instead of the slips on which the book is sewn being laced into the boards and then being subsequently covered with the material selected. But in France *cartonnage à la Bradel* has become a fine art mainly through the instrumentality of M. Carayon. Supposed to be of German origin, it takes its name from the binder who first used it in France, where for some time it was considered as a temporary binding for books of value which in this way were left uncut at the edges and handled as little as possible. M. Carayon, born in 1840, started life as a soldier, soon giving up that career

to become a decorative painter; but his love of books and all that concerns them finally decided his occupation. Type of the true art worker, he is to be found all day long in his atelier, though sadly crippled with rheumatism, devising some new application of *le genre Bradel.* All materials come alike to him; morocco, calf, vellum, brocade, velvet, even simple paper, produce in his hands the most exquisite results. Amateurs confide to his charge their most costly possessions, and the first artists of the day, such as Robaudi, Henriot and Louis Morin, decorate his vellum work with pen-and-ink and water-colour drawings. If one wants, indeed, to realize that the beauty of a binding does not lie in tooling, or indeed in any kind of ornament, one need only handle the little paper-covered books turned out by Carayon for a few francs. At the same time neither inlaying nor gilding has any secrets from him, and he devises the modelled leather work executed for him by Rudeaux with the delicacy and sure-

46. Bound by Carayon.

47. Bound by Carayon.

ness of taste that distinguish all he undertakes.

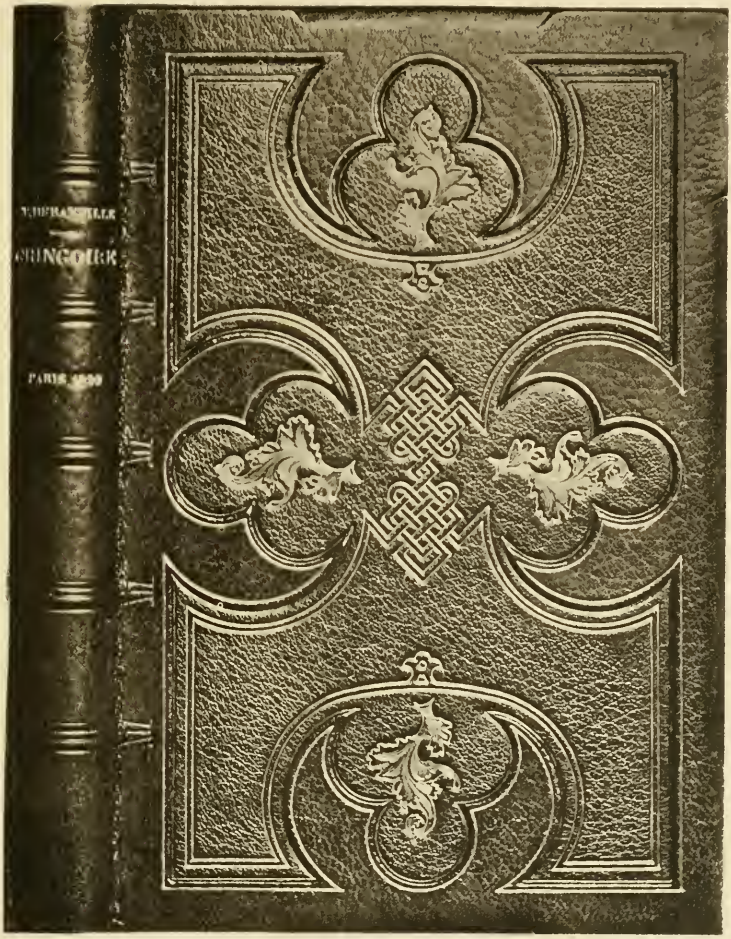
Chambolle most worthily continues the traditions associated with the name of his father. As an interpreter of the past he has a place apart and almost untouched by the main revolutionary movement that has penetrated nearly every atelier in Paris, and modified, if not overturned, its inherited traditions. To him are confided the classics of former times, which he clothes in the styles appropriate to them, keeping to a simplicity of ornamentation which reveals great taste and feeling for composition. Wisely enough, he rarely goes outside his own domain, where, in these days of reckless pursuit of novelty, he remains almost supreme.

Canape is a young binder of increasing reputation. At present he seems to specialize in what is called *la gaufrure à froid*, in which different-coloured moroccos are tooled without gold—a style which has been much in favour of late years, and in which Marius

Michel was the first to effect great triumphs. His career has been watched with much interest for the last few years, and he is thought to be steadily taking place in the first rank.

Kieffer, too, is a binder whose work has a distinctly personal touch, and whose bindings have an individuality of their own. The reproductions shown testify to a certain largeness of conception in design, which, though somewhat mannered, has distinct value.

M. Pierre Roche has struck a new note in what he calls *la reliure églomisée*. It is work done on something of the same lines as that attempted by Mr. Cedric Chivers of Bath. He uses a transparent vellum which covers and protects the decoration, which thus appears, to use his own words, as if behind a veil. 'C'est l'esprit du livre qui vient du dedans en dehors apparaître au travers des matières solides qui le protègent.' A sculptor of great talent, this has been merely a recreation to him. He has done



48. Bound by Chambolle.

but a small number of books for a few distinguished clients, and, notwithstanding their success, has, like a true artist, refused to be drawn into manufacturing them, feeling it doubtful whether it is a style that should be popularized to any great extent, or rather remain as an occasional variation of the more accredited ways of book-cover decoration.

We have perhaps said enough to indicate the variety of the work shown at the Galliera Museum, its high attainment in the field of design, and its still higher achievement in the matter of craftsmanship. One impression remains very clearly, that there were two distinct classes of exhibitors, the professional binder, so to speak, and the artist intent on producing decorative material for bindings. The first looks at a book as a thing to bind and handle, and is restrained in his methods by the use and purpose to which it is to be put. The second considers it as a surface to decorate, by means of painting or the aid of any other of

the arts. The modelled work of Lepère, above alluded to, is an instance of this; so also is that of Mdme. Vallgren, which likewise consist of panels that are let into bindings prepared for that purpose by Marius and others. Admirable in their way, they would be equally effective as decorative objects framed upon a wall, and can but be considered a fantasy in connexion with books. Bibliomania in France is responsible for much that is disastrously eccentric and decadent. It is a form of vanity in which collectors vie with each other, and involves an expenditure not only on books but on bindings that would now seem to have reached the limit of extravagance. But such eccentricity is less than it was, and need no longer fill the eye to the exclusion of what is really finely conceived as well as exquisitely executed. If Paris still produces too many bindings of the bizarre and overdecorated kind, we can still go to her for the masterpieces of simplicity and for flawlessness of material faultlessly treated.

Some day even the best binders may cease to support *l'art nouveau* by the force of their skill and energy, but will rather confine themselves, as in the past, to the simple dignity that distinguished bindings in the best periods, and to the accomplishment of that fine restraint which must always be the high-water mark of bookbinding as a fine art.

EDITION BINDING

EDITION BINDING[1]

Of late years, with that revival of craftsmanship, according to the gospel of Ruskin and William Morris, already dwelt upon, there has been a rush into all the departments of manual dexterity needing for successful achievement the guidance of artistic feeling. The result of this has been that there is a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the ornamental and the decorated, to the exclusion of not only simplicity but, let us say frankly, of plainness and the undecorated surface of flawless material. The over-elaboration of the decorative arts must inevitably produce a reaction sooner or later, very quickly for those who prefer restraint, more slowly for the majority of the public,

[1] The author wishes to acknowledge permission, which she has received from *The Printing Art*, to print in this country this last chapter, which first appeared in that periodical.

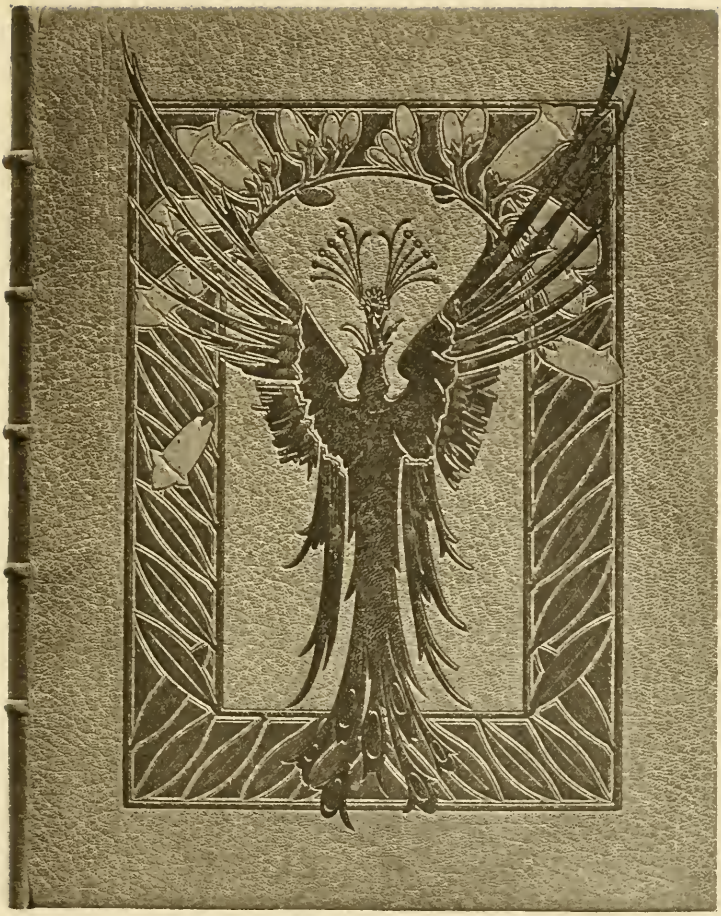
to whom ornament is always synonymous with art. For such as these fashion counts for much; and it is in the hope that those who lead taste in the matter of edition bindings may find a scope for their enterprise on somewhat new lines that I ask consideration for this chapter.

After all, the costly bindings achieved for wealthy amateurs must always constitute but a small portion of the output of bound work. There will remain the cloth or leather-covered book in greater or smaller editions, for which covers are made in quantities by machinery, separately from the book, and for decorating which metal dies are cut and stamped by means of an embossing press, either with or without the addition of colours or gold leaf. It is of this class of work that I propose to treat, giving first a brief account of the stages through which it has passed in modern times, then showing how it was dealt with, though on a much smaller scale, in the early days of printing, and finally offering some

suggestions for its more varied and, as I think, more artistic treatment in the future. This treatment would necessitate the employment of leather; but there is no reason why the less expensive kinds of skins should not be used, not perhaps for books issued in large numbers, but for small editions where a little extra outlay could be easily recovered on the published price of the work. Roans made from the best sheepskins, which are the hides of Scotch sheep, would not be a costly material, and would give good results in the embossing press. Pigskin is a very suitable material for the better class of bindings on which stamps are to be used, and is both strong and comparatively inexpensive, considering the size of the skins. Vellum, again, might be occasionally used for small editions; it blocks well, and is most effective with but little ornament. At one time much in demand for bindings, it ceased for many years to be used at all in England, except in account-book manufacture, when it was generally

stained green. It has lately come into fashion again, chiefly for limp work, through the initiative of William Morris, who introduced it on most of the works issued by him from the Kelmscott Press; and both the Doves Press and the Ashendene Press have continued to employ it. To observe its suitability for blocking, either when used limp or on boards, we have only to turn to the coats-of-arms which frequently decorated it on the books of the great collectors of past times. There was a very fine specimen of vellum, ornamented in black, shown at the Burlington Fine Arts Exhibition in 1891. But before considering in detail how edition bindings were treated in the days when, comparatively speaking, books were few in number, we will get some idea of their treatment in more recent times, starting with the last century.

Up to, roughly speaking, about 1825, books of the type of dictionaries, classics, school-books, and books of reference were



51. Bound by Canape.

mostly bound in roan or sprinkled sheep; while books of history, poetry, and novels were issued in drab or olive-coloured paper boards, with a printed label pasted on the back, or the full title printed on the back and sides, as in the case of Walker's *British Classics* (1818). It was very rarely that anything but a dull colour was used, though Whittingham's *British Poets* (1816) had a dark Venetian red paper, and the class of literature known in those days as gift-books or annuals occasionally appeared in vellum-coloured paper, stamped with gold. The more valuable of these, however, filled with choice steel engravings and prepared for the Christmas market, were bound in morocco and silk, and issued under such titles as *The Keepsake*, *The Bijou*, *Friendship's Offering*, *The Book of Beauty*, *The Landscape Annual*, and so on. Such books commanded a large sale, even in those days; and a writer on the subject, in the first volume of *The Bookbinder*, mentions Finden's *Tableaux*, two thousand imperial quarto volumes, full

bound in best morocco, gilt. The paper-covered boards, which clothed the larger number of the books of that time, had a way of cracking at the hinge, and so becoming disconnected, a difficulty which was got over about 1822 by covering the back with calico or cloth. As an illustration of this step we may take Scott's *Waverley Novels.* The *Novels and Tales,* in twelve volumes, appeared in 1819 in pink paper, with white labels; the *Historical Romances,* in six volumes, followed in 1822, in blue paper, with pink cloth back and white paper labels; and *Novels and Romances* in 1824 in the same fashion. The next step was that of covering books entirely with cloth, introduced by Mr. Archibald Leighton, one of the most enterprising and successful of modern binders, whose business capacity and energy secured for him the patronage of the chief publishers of the day. He bound for Murray, Pickering, Colbourn, Tilt, Charles Knight, Moon, Boys, Graves, and many others, and died

prematurely in 1841, leaving to his family a well-established business which, under a somewhat varying character, has remained in their hands up to the present time.

In the *Bookseller* of July 4, 1881, there is an interesting account, by Mr. Robert Leighton, of the invention of bookbinders' cloth by his father, and of how the subsequent embossing of it came about. The exact date of cloth binding he is not able to state, but says that he has in his library a volume, presented to his father by the author, bound in smooth, red cloth, with a paper label. The publishers' names are Lackington, Hughes, Harding and Lepard, and the date on the title-page is 1822. There is every reason to believe that it is one of a number similarly bound in that year. In those days the white calico was bought in London, sent to the dyers to be dyed, and thence to Mr. John Southgate, of 3 Crown Court, Old Change, to be stiffened and calendered. The embossing of bookbinders' cloth was suggested by

Mr. Archibald Leighton to the late Mr. de la Rue, and was carried out so admirably by him, with the appliances he possessed for embossing paper, that his process remains still comparatively unaltered. The desired pattern was engraved on a gun-metal cylinder, and transferred in reverse to one made of compressed paper, strung upon an iron spindle and turned in the lathe to the exact circumference of the gun-metal one, and these two being worked together in a machine, and the pattern transferred from one to the other, the cloth was passed between them and received the impress of the pattern engraved on the metal cylinder.

In this way the whole of the cloth used by Messrs. Leighton was for many years embossed upon their own premises. The cylinders were only fourteen or fifteen inches wide, and the machine was turned by manual labour and heated by red-hot irons, which were placed in the gun-metal cylinder and replaced by others when cold.

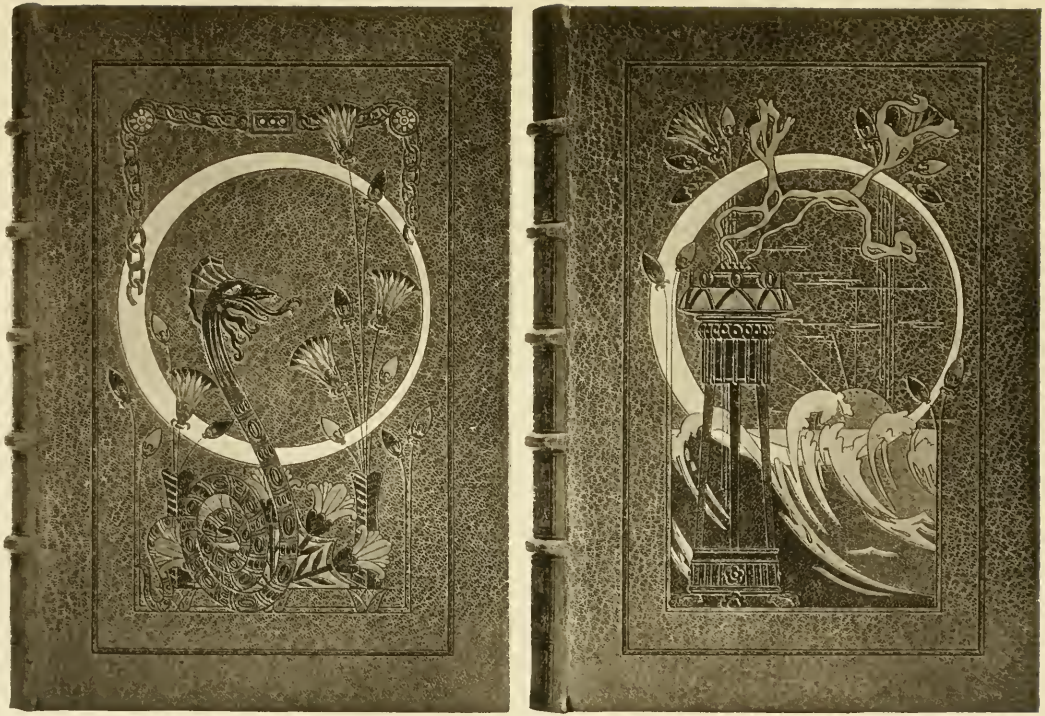
52. Bound by Canape.

In those days it was customary to engrave special cylinders for books of importance, and you may still occasionally meet with stray volumes of *The Penny Cyclopædia* or Knight's *Pictorial England*, and such like popular works, with embossed cloth covers so prepared. Mr. Pickering was the first person for whom Mr. Leighton bound books in cloth, and either his 'Aldine Poets' or the 'Diamond Classics' were the first books on which it was put. The first person to undertake the embossing of bookbinders' cloth on cylinders a yard wide was Mr. Law, of Monkwell Street, and for years he embossed all the cloth sold by Mr. James Leonard Wilson, of St. John Street, who had followed Mr. Leighton's methods in the preparation and sale of the cloth. Mr. Wilson sold his business to Messrs. Duffield, who established a manufactory of bookbinders' cloth at Hoxton, and so improved it that for years he held practically a monopoly of its output. The exact period when gold-stamping was first applied to

cloth is clearly marked by the publication of Lord Byron's life and works, in seventeen volumes, by Mr. John Murray, of Albemarle Street. The volumes were published monthly, and had a sale of about 20,000. They were bound in green cloth, and the first volume was issued in 1832, with a green paper label on the back, matching the cloth in colour, on which was printed in bronze the title and a coronet; on the second and succeeding volumes the paper label was dispensed with, and the coronet and title were stamped in gold upon the cloth itself. Mr. Henry George Bohn, in a letter addressed to the *Art Journal*, says that his father, John Henry Bohn, a German bookbinder, established about 1795 in Frith Street, Soho, had a special reputation for gilding on the silk linings of books, as well as calf-graining, tree-marbling, and other special processes, all of which he himself made acquaintance with when a boy. 'In later life,' he continues, 'the knowledge of the peculiar

dressing used for gilding on silk enabled me to communicate to Mr. Leighton the means of getting cloth prepared so as to take gilding by heated machinery at the rolling or stamping press, which a leading trade firm said was impracticable. The process, however, after a few weeks' experiments conducted by the late Mr. James Leonard Wilson, was successfully accomplished; and Mr. Leighton thereupon wrote to me triumphantly announcing the fact, and undertaking in consequence to bind in gilt cloth several thousand volumes at half the price I should previously have had to pay, on account of the necessity of having to add leather backs for taking the gold by hand tooling. The book was Martin and Westall's *Bible Points*, which I brought out in 1832. What to me at the time seemed an accomplishment of little moment has now become of such importance to cloth binders that, could the discovery have been patented, it would have yielded a considerable income.'

This Mr. Robert Leighton, who thus wrote of his father's invention, was himself the pioneer in the use of steam machinery in bookbinding, and he adopted in his own business nearly all the machinery which has since become indispensable to the wholesale binder. He was also the first to use steam power for blocking in gold; the first to use aluminium, and black and coloured inks for cloth cases, examples of which he showed in the exhibition of 1851. He had a great reputation for the designs of his cloth bindings, which he devised in conjunction with his artist cousin, John Leighton, known as Luke Limner, a good instance being the pleasant and appropriate covers for Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna* and *Legends of the Monastic Orders.* The two Leightons, father and son, thus inaugurated and furthered the great revolution in the art of edition binding associated with the employment for the purpose of specially prepared cloth, and its decoration by means of steam-blocking in gold and



53. Bound by Canape.

colours. It was natural that such an invention should lead to abuse; and in a short time, unfortunately, there was so much gilt ornament that a strong reaction took place, and, while cloth as a material for the cover continued to be used, it was either left plain or had a single bordering line in gold, with or without the title likewise in gold upon the sides. More recently colour printing upon cloth has been revived with excellent results in many cases, especially where an artist who understands the power and limitations of the blocking process has been employed upon the designs. Many of these are entirely without gold, and give representations of scenes taken from the books with excellent impressionist effect. One may mention as instances in England the novels published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, such as *In Our Town*, *Her Majesty's Minister*, *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, *The Hebrew*, and many others of the same firm, one of whose members gives special attention to the

successful production of cloth covers. The bindings of books issued by Mr. John Lane are also frequently very successful, though it is not so easy to keep in touch with the output of American work on similar lines. Messrs. Puttenham have produced some excellent examples of taste in colour printing, notably *The Romance of the Colorado River*, *Puerto Rican*, *Lights of Childhood*, and *The Romance of the Renaissance Chateaux*, in which the castle of Langeais is shown in black on a grey cloth. The same house publish likewise one or two books bound in plain cloth, with a photographic print on the cover, which seemed a pleasant variation not in use over here; while *Twenty-Six Historic Ships*, also issued by them, is a most satisfactory example of blocking with white foil on a blue ground. At Messrs. Appleton's are to be found several specimens of bookbinders' cloth which do not come over here at all. We have but little variety in the nature and preparation of our cloth; while in America it is treated in many

different ways, which naturally give very varied results in the blocking-press.

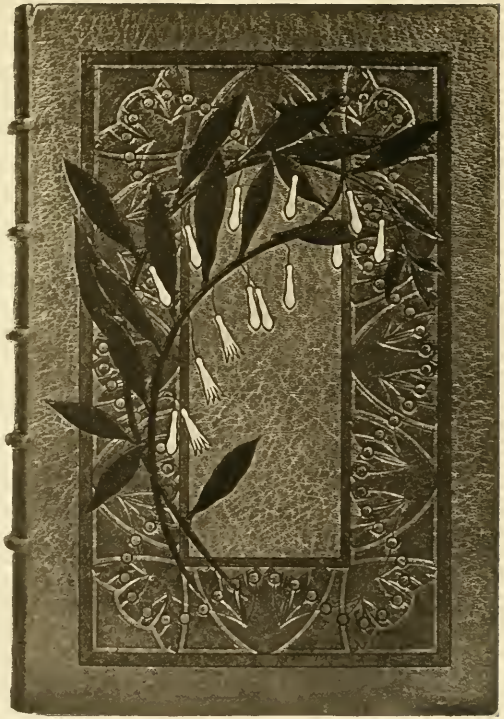
Messrs. Gay and Bird issue some effective colour printing on *In South Africa with Buller*, and an attractive example of a loch and mountain scene in four sombre colours on *The Story of Gösta Berling*. There is little doubt that the most artistic effects are got by using very few colours in harmony rather than in contrast with the cloth. Gold is much more sparingly used for cloth work than formerly, and with far better taste. *Paris in its Splendour*, published by the last-named firm, is an interesting example of the different effects that can be obtained from the gold by varieties of matted ground in the block; while in *Walden*, issued by Messrs. Houghton and Mifflin, the cloth of the cover represents the design, the gold being confined to suggesting the background, with a decidedly original result.

This, then, is the position of cloth binding at the present time as shown by the

leading publishers' work. The technical processes are probably as perfect as such things can be, the drawings are frequently the work of artists, there is far more restraint than formerly both in the matter of design and the employment of colour, while the taste in colour schemes is often as good as possible, and a great advance on that shown a decade or two ago. We do not think that in that special branch of edition bindings there is any great advance to be made or novelty to be assumed, though no doubt we may expect a wider diffusion of the taste that we have noted in the best work and an increasingly small number of book covers inferior in design, colour, and general effect.

In what direction, then, can we hope for any new departure? In order to answer the question, and complete the scope of this chapter, it is necessary to spend a short time in studying the bindings in which books were clothed when they were less numerous, and during a period when

54. Bound by Canape.



55. Bound by Canape.

they reached what many think the high-water mark of successful decoration.

The work of the early printers was issued in trade bindings just as publishers' work is now sent out, but in those days stationers combined the craft of binding with the business of bookselling. The earliest of all were decorated by building up designs from dies, these being arranged in pattern schemes which Mr. W. H. James Weale was the first to analyze and set forth in the catalogue of the fine collection of rubbings of bindings which he presented to the National Art Library of South Kensington in 1894. These schemes were taken from the covers of manuscripts from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, but the same kind of arrangement, though not so elaborate, may be seen on the earliest printed books; also witness the illustrations to the monographs on early Oxford and Cambridge bindings issued by the Bibliographical Society. Small books were stamped with a panel on the sides, and these often had the initials or

mark of the binder, which have led in many instances to the ascription of particular bindings to the stationers who issued them, though a still greater number still remain to be identified. The blocks were generally small, and were used sometimes one on each side between a bordering of roughly drawn lines; sometimes two together were placed upon one side, and connected with lines or some simple device; and occasionally on large books four panels were arranged in rows of two. The material of the binding was ass's-skin, pigskin, calfskin,—though not the fragile kind now associated with the name—and vellum, but chiefly the three first. The stamps or blocks used were cut in intaglio, either on hard wood or on metal, producing the impression in cameo; the design was often both strong and delicate in treatment, the impression after all these years showing great artistic vigour and inventiveness. Indeed, nothing can be more excellent than the dragons, gryphons, and other mythical animals in the pear-

shaped, triangular, circular, or square dies arranged within the pattern schemes of the very early bindings. It is known exactly how these stamps were used upon the bindings; it is probable that, when panel stamps were used, the leather was thoroughly wetted and the book then placed in a screw press, under a block of wood or metal, for the length of time needed to obtain a clear impression. In *Marques Typographiques* by Silvestre, there is a printers' mark, used by Petrus Cesar Gaudanus, otherwise Pierre de Keyser, of Ghent, between 1516 and 1547, which represents a book undergoing pressure in a printers' press; and Josse Bade, likewise a stationer and printer of Paris, who died in 1535, used a somewhat similar one. Though there is obviously a book in the press, the picture may relate to a process not connected with binding; but in any case it probably represents what must have been the precedure used in impressing the stamps. These dies passed from one workshop to another, and none of them are

extant to my knowledge in England, though the heraldic blocks used on books in the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. were decidedly numerous and of great artistic merit. In the Netherlands these designs were the binders' property and protected as such, but in England, where the binders were not organized into separate guilds, this was not the case, and piracy was everywhere prevalent.

On many of the blocks there appear two indentations or holes about a quarter of an inch in diameter, situated within the border at the top and bottom of the panel. The precise purport of these is unknown, and many plausible theories have been invented to account for them. One such suggests that they were stop buttons to prevent the stamp from sinking too far into the leather, but it is more probable that they indicate the heads of nails or pegs which fastened the carved block or metal stamp to another piece of wood. Sometimes the impressions made by them are almost imperceptible, at

56. Bound by Kieffer.

others there has been an attempt at concealment by carrying the ornament across. Many of the subjects pictured on these stamps were of a religious character: thus the Baptism of Christ, Saint John the Baptist, the Crucifixion, Our Lady of Pity, the Ara Cœli, and the different saints and apostles, are all represented upon these early book covers. For an account of them, and for a general history of early stamped bindings, which contains also a certain amount of illustration, the interested reader cannot do better than procure the two volumes, published at half a crown by the Department of Science and Art, at South Kensington, entitled *Bookbindings and Rubbings of Bindings in the National Art Library of South Kensington Museum*, by W. H. James Weale. This class of binding has given rise to much dispute of an archæological kind, with which, happily, we are not concerned at the moment. Whether the stamps were of wood or metal, in what country they originated, their authorship as

indicated by initials incorporated in the design, their *provenance* as apart from the country in which they were in use, who was the inventor of the pattern roller,—all such questions we may leave aside, the point of interest being the fact of the stamp and its astonishing variety of character, for many styles were represented by it, all, with but few exceptions, of great merit and suitability to their end. For the present purpose, and as far as ornament is concerned, they may be classified somewhat as follows :—

1. Small Gothic dies with palmated leaves, animals, and so on, combined in design according to certain fixed patterns, such as those on the Bible written and bound in the monastery at Durham for Hugh Pudsey, bishop of that diocese from 1153 to 1195, and other books in the same cathedral library.

2. Interlaced ornament of several distinct types, some Celtic in character, on the earliest books in leather that have come down to us, executed in the north of

England in the twelfth century, others recalling the designs on Roman mosaic pavement; others, again, Eastern in character. Perhaps the most beautiful interlaced patterns of all belong to the latter class, and are the cablework designs found on Italian books of the last half of the fifteenth century, no doubt copied from Arabian examples.

The Spanish bindings of the first half of the sixteenth century have interlaced ornament of as fine a kind, but often lacking in the comparative simplicity of the Italian.

3. The Gothic stamps of mythical animals, enclosed in circles or scrollwork, bordered with Gothic foliage, and frequently containing a legend. These were mostly of German origin, and were no doubt inspired by the work of Albert Dürer and his contemporaries.

4. The heraldic panels decorated with royal badges, used in England during the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII.

5. The panel stamps of a purely decora-

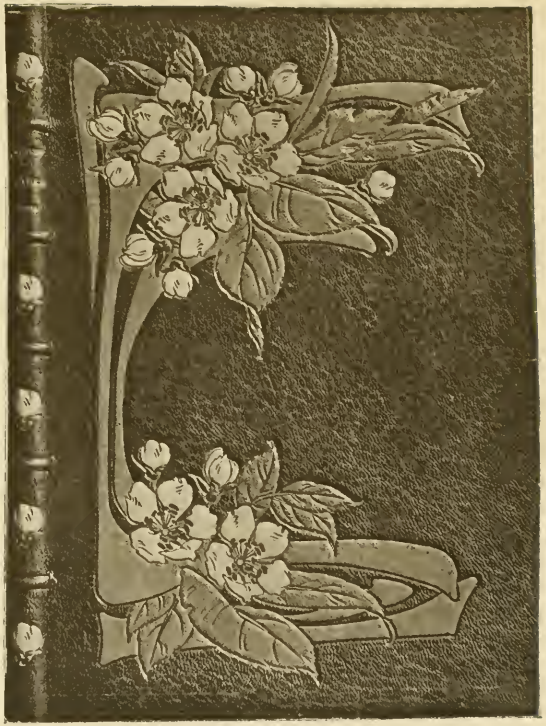
tive kind, such as those with the religious subjects above mentioned; others like the well-known two used by Moulin, of a miller with his sacks, in punning allusion to his name; and those in use by Norins, in which the acorn figures largely as an ornament.

6. Lastly, the panel stamps with two profile busts in medallion within a framework of Renaissance ornament, thoroughly debased in character, and marking the complete decline of the binder's stamp.

I would sum up, in conclusion, the points I have desired to emphasize, and which are as follows:—

That the flat blocking of cloth work in gold and colours by no means exhausts the treatment possible for edition or publishers' bindings. It has undoubtedly been largely overdone, for lavish ornament is distinctly out of place as applied to cheap material, such as cloths and linens. Indeed, as decoration for the ordinary novel of a few shillings nothing is in better taste than a single design carried out in two or three

57. Bound by Kieffer.



58. Bound by Kieffer.

colour printings without gold, such as some of those mentioned.

That there is room for a totally distinct class of bindings for small editions of more important publications, which should be in leather and blocked with a stamp of fine design without gold, which will give a raised impression. For this purpose zincographic blocks are of no use, but brass, as a material which admits of modelling, would be imperative.

That the designing of such stamps should be put in the hands of the few artists having a genius for the work, which is quite special in character, and belongs more to the art of the medallist than to that of the maker of patterns. We in no way want their undue multiplication, but would rather, indeed, that they should be reserved for a limited number of publications, for which the subject-matter, paper and type constitute together a whole, worthy of a dignified cover that will stand the lapse of time. In these days of book lovers and

collectors of every sort, it is certainly not unlikely that there are many who would welcome a new venture of this kind, in which they would associate the binding with the book, and have no desire to separate the one from the other. In the little Bibelot series, Messrs. Gay and Bird have already made a slight attempt on the lines I am suggesting.

Lastly, we have tried to show that there is no dearth of material from which the designer of such work may glean the principles on which it should be based, in order to secure satisfactory results. Apart from the bindings still extant, which may be studied for the purpose, such sources as the *Book of Kells* and *Early Christian Art in Ireland*, by Margaret Stokes, are full of illustrations in a field strangely little explored by the pattern-maker of to-day.

While only a limited number of early examples have been instanced, they are suggestive of what was done in edition binding in the past, and may be done

again in the future. Such a departure needs, no doubt, the initiative of a printer-publisher who does the best kind of work, and in a field that commands the interested support of the genuine book lover. Surely, however, to find such an one ought not to be difficult with the widespread interest now shown in every detail of book production.

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